COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS: A COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: A CASE STUDY OF A WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD IN THE MIDWEST

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ABSTRACT

The United States continues to face high unemployment. Even though employers claim they have jobs, they are unable to find qualified individuals. Federally funded workforce programs can play an important role in bridging gaps between the skills available in the workforce, and the skills needed for today’s job market. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) aimed at strengthening the collaborative partnerships between workforce programs, employers, education, and other stakeholders to develop effective labor force initiatives; however, research has found that collaboration among stakeholders remains a challenge. The purpose of this study is to investigate ways in which community colleges and business leaders develop and implement effective programs that can assist Americans in obtaining and mastering the skills necessary to compete in local and global job markets. This inquiry focuses specifically on the collaborative partnerships formed between business leaders—members of a local Workforce Investment Board (WIB)—and local community college leaders who join in their efforts to provide individuals with academic and employment skills in a Midwestern regional area.

The findings of this qualitative case study illustrate how a WIB’s effective strategies are spread through collaboration and alignment of education (K-12—Higher Education), employers, labor unions, government, economic development organizations, and related agencies, and how its purposeful cross-sector collaborative partnership model
can be effective at both meeting labor market needs and creating pathways to employment.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The United States is not meeting its commitment to educating millions of young adults for the skills they need to lead prosperous and productive lives in the 21st century (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011). According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the skills of U.S. adults lag behind the skills of adults in other countries; hence, these workforces will increasingly outpace those of the U.S. “The speed at which the skills of comparable developed countries are now outpacing the U.S. must be a matter of deep concern” (OECD, 2013, p. 12). The percentage of young adults who are employed is now at the lowest level since World War II, (Symonds et al, 2011). Youth unemployment is increasing in some states across the country and specifically large cities. For example, a report by the Chicago Alternative Schools Network found that teen employment rates continue to decline in the State of Illinois, plummeting from 37% in 2006 to just 27% in 2012.

The 21st century is an era driven by innovation and knowledge. “The ingenuity, agility and skills of the American people are crucial to U.S. competitiveness” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008, p. 1). Preparing young adults with a foundation of literacy, numeracy, thinking, interpersonal, and communication skills to help them become productive members of society is important for their future and for the country (Symonds et al., 2011).
The lack of skilled workers in most occupations (as cited in Mathews, 2012) has increased awareness about the need to enhance collaborative partnerships across sectors of government, and across public and private sectors to achieve better workforce outcomes (Mathews, 2013; OECD, 2013). President Obama’s administration, philanthropic foundations, higher education foundations, elected officials, and other stakeholders are increasingly calling for the creation of collaborative partnerships among businesses, workforce development providers, and educational organizations to identify well-designed workforce training programs that provide individuals with appropriate skills (The White House, 2012; Bumphus, 2012). Collaborative partnerships are needed for many reasons including the need to provide individuals with meaningful, experiential learning opportunities that can lead to employment. In addition, increased collaboration between the public and private sectors often broadens the range of funding opportunities for workforce projects.

For example, the U.S. government recently increased its support of community colleges and other institutions to strengthen workforce collaborative partnerships (The White House, 2012). The goal is to enhance academic experience with experiential learning such as work-based and problem-based learning and internships (Roberts & Kuruvilla, 2013). A partnership approach between educational institutions and businesses can have many benefits including improved student outcomes and increased employment opportunities (Conway, Blair, & Helmer, 2012; Kerka, 2008). The federal government’s largest workforce investment system, the Workforce Investment Act legislation acknowledged the importance of collaborative partnerships by “demanding” cross sector cooperation.
Therefore, further enhancing and sustaining collaborative partnerships among workforce program providers, community colleges, industry, and the public is essential to meet today’s complex labor challenges in the local, state, national, and global markets.

**Statement of the Problem**

High youth unemployment is costing the United States economy and the public $9 billion in tax revenue each year at the federal and state level (Allison, O'Sullivan, & Mugglestone, 2014). People who are unemployed as young adults earn lower wages for many years following their period of unemployment due to the missed opportunities to develop on-the-job skills (Allison et al, 2014). Moreover, unemployed individuals are more likely to become involved in crime and to rely on public assistance and government health care (Ayres, 2013). The United States cannot afford to let young people miss out on opportunities to develop their skills, earn a salary, and become productive members of society (Ayres, 2013).

A report released by the Opportunity Nation coalition in October 2013 found that 15% of youth aged 16–24 are out of work and out of school (Opportunity Index, 2008). Another study found that individuals between the ages of 18 and 34 have now experienced double-digit unemployment rates for almost six years, with unemployment rates hitting those between the ages of 16 and 24 years a lot harder (Allison, et al, 2014). In other words, almost six million youth are unemployed (Opportunity Index, 2008).

Young and older adults in the nation are unable to find jobs; yet, thousands of jobs go unfilled because employers cannot find skilled individuals (Gates & Cribbs, 2011). Nearly a dozen studies (e.g., OECD, 2013; Houchin, 2012; Gates & Cribbs, 2011)
have cited employers who state that the primary reason positions go unfilled is due to the lack of experience, skills, or knowledge of applicants.

A report from the Economic Policy Institute states that the U.S. labor market remains remarkably weak. “Nearly eight million jobs are needed just to restore the labor market to pre-recession health” (Shierholz, 2014). This means that the economic health of many states across the nation is suffering. For example, the National Opportunity Coalition found that 49 states have experienced an increase in the number of families living in poverty and 45 states have seen household median incomes fall in the last year (Opportunity Index, 2008).

The unemployment of both young individuals and adults is likely to be an economic drain on communities across the country. Predictions that 67% of the jobs in Illinois will require career and certificate degrees by 2020 have many worried that the skills gap will only get wider (Carnevale, Rose, & Hanson, 2012). In times of economic downturn, the United States government has been the catalyst and first responder when issues of unemployment arise. While the U.S. Congress has a long history of creating policies to address unemployment and the training of unskilled workers, the investments made by the federal government do not always produce results.

In 1998, the federal government continued its longtime commitment to addressing the labor market needs of this country by revamping its existing workforce programs through the WIA. However, more than 15 years since its implementation, the WIA is yet to demonstrate its effectiveness (Decker & Berk, 2011). According to Decker and Berk, the WIA’s shortcomings include lack of effectiveness, performance, and accountability as
well as issues with board composition, duplication of programs, and flawed audit reports and transparency (Howle & Cordiner, 2012; Moran, 2013).

These investigative reports include a myriad of recommendations to improve the nation’s workforce system, the WIA. Programs administered under the WIA are important for the unemployed, for economic development, and for local communities. The programs under the WIA often serve as the bridge between education and training. Legislators, the public, and unemployed individuals have a “muddy picture of the WIA, a workforce program designed to help people develop skills to rejoin the workforce or to bounce back when they lose their job after a factory closes or their jobs are eliminated” (Czekalinski, 2014). The goals envisioned by the creators of the WIA have not been accomplished and it must improve its performance (State of Oregon, Secretary of State Audit Report, 2012).

**Rationale for the Study**

Little is known about collaborations that lead to effective partnerships in the context of workforce investment programs, and there is a lack of a significant amount of scholarly literature regarding the WIA. Straus (2002) posited that collaboration can be a powerful experience when efforts are well managed, and there are some factors that contribute to effective collaborations, such as the group’s alignment with its direction and the personal and professional commitment from its members. It is not clear what factors contribute to building collaborations that lead to effective partnerships among the WIA’s mandated and non-mandated partners to address the complex labor issues of our time. The research to date has tended to focus on the WIA’s common measures. The United
States Government Accountability Office (GAO), a non-partisan organization, which serves to audit, evaluate, and investigate Congress, usually generates these policy reports.

The WIA’s common measures include the number of individuals who entered and retained employment, average earnings, youth placement in employment or education, attainment of a degree or certificate, and literacy and numeracy gains (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). In December 2013, the GOA found that the data submitted by states to the U.S. Department of Labor was “inconsistent and incomplete” due to antiquated systems. According the GOA report, it is unclear how many people are being trained, who the recipients of the programs are, and what type of services they receive (Moran, 2013).

The creators of the WIA recognized the potential benefits of collaborative partnerships between employers and the workforce investment system by mandating the creation of cooperation among all partners. However, these collaborations are not always successful. A recent report to congressional committees found that building collaborations among mandated and non-mandated partners has been a challenge among the WIA providers due to the time and resources it takes to build relationships (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2012b).

The high unemployment rates of the country coupled with the documentation about the WIA’s ineffectiveness (Decker & Berk, 2011) has many worried. Increasingly, the government, educational associations, philanthropic foundations, and the public are calling for enhanced collaborative partnerships between higher education and businesses to improve workforce development (Bumphus, 2012). These groups and community members realize that businesses are customers of workforce development programs and
should be working closely with educational leaders, WIB providers, and other stakeholders to address the complex labor issues of our time. Therefore, collaborative partnerships between businesses and educational institutions can provide the academic and applied learning needed to satisfy the demand for skilled workers (Ryan & Heim, 1997; Kerka, 2008). However, businesses and education do not always speak the same language and rarely build effective partnerships due to the differences that exist with organizational styles and culture (Kerka, 2008). Building effective, meaningful, and sustainable partnerships between business and education leaders is essential to developing workforce plans that utilize accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date labor market information.

Through collaborative partnerships between businesses and educational leaders, individuals can have meaningful employment opportunities such as on-the-job work experiences, quality supervision, and connection to supportive services and mentoring. In addition to on-the-job training opportunities, individuals can increase their chance of furthering their education. A path to employability means earning some type of postsecondary credential that has value in the job market. A postsecondary certificate can be a stepping-stone for students to begin earning college credits or to help them gain the skills they need for the workforce (Carnevale et al., 2012). Most importantly, students who complete some type of certificate or degree can earn greater wage benefits than those who do not earn college credit. According to Conway et al (2012), a collaborative partnership approach between businesses and education has the potential to improve student outcomes and local employment opportunities.
Collaborations between education and business leaders are important in terms of engaging individuals in experiential learning such as employer-based instruction, problem-based learning, and internships. Through practical experience opportunities, individuals learn skills and see firsthand how businesses operate. These hands-on experiences can also lead individuals to attaining a degree or a certificate, thus increasing their employability opportunities and hopefully furthering their education (Carnevale et al, 2012). Moreover, recent discussions about the value of earning a workforce certificate and a new movement in today’s manufacturing industry bring a renewed awareness about the value of partnerships among workforce providers, community colleges, and employers (Fain, 2012). In addition to providing practical experience opportunities, employers bring key insights about the labor market, which is an important element in helping create pathways for opportunity (Bridgeland & Milano, 2012). Similarly, educational institutions such as community colleges and their history of training the workforce are essential elements in addressing the skills gaps.

Collaborative partnerships between employers and community colleges can result in enhanced education and effective workforce models. Ignoring the skills gap and the need to work together only increases the number of uneducated workers who are less productive, earn less, and do not provide meaningful contributions to society. For instance, high school dropouts can expect to earn at least $500,000 less over the course of their lifetime than those who attain a high school degree (American Society for Training, 2013).

This study fills in significant gaps that exist with regard to how businesses and community colleges develop collaborations that lead to effective partnerships for
workforce development. While many collaborative partnerships are taking place between higher educational institutions and the private sector across the nation, there is a lack of scholarly research about the WIA’s collaborative efforts. Additional research is needed to understand how leaders engage, dialogue, and share power and learning with each other to address today’s complex labor market problems.

An in-depth analysis of cross sector collaborative partnerships provide valuable insights for policymakers, education and businesses leaders, and those charged with implementing policy initiatives focused on promoting workforce development. Learning about the perspectives of business and education leaders on how they leverage their respective knowledge and resources to prepare individuals for future employment and academic experiences has the potential to shed light on the benefits of building meaningful collaborative partnerships that lead to effective workforce development.

Many unskilled individuals are unemployed or underemployed and earn significantly lower wages when compared to wages earned by skilled individuals. The lack of earnings of unemployed individuals not only affects the individuals and their families, it also affects communities and the nation. In this context, learning about effective collaborative partnerships between community colleges and business leaders and the factors that enable them to work together to achieve workforce investment goals is crucial to addressing the local, regional, and the state’s labor market issues.

**Research Purposes and Questions**

Given the high unemployment rates in the nation and the “talent paradox,” which means that jobs go unfilled even in times of high unemployment, an examination of the contributing factors that lead to effective workforce development partnerships is critical.
The purpose of this study is to investigate ways in which business leaders and community colleges develop and implement effective programs that have the potential to improve people’s lives through obtaining and mastering the skills necessary to compete in local and global labor markets. This inquiry focuses specifically on the collaborative partnerships formed between business leaders—members of a local Workforce Investment Board (WIB)—and local community college leaders, who join their efforts to provide individuals with academic knowledge and employment skills in a Midwestern regional area.

The primary question addressed in this study is: How do business and community college leaders build and sustain partnerships towards effective implementation of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) initiatives in the Midwest? Additional questions include:

1. What are the historical and legislative contexts in which the WIA’s local area Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) in the Midwest developed regional and local collaborative partnerships?

2. What are the motivational factors for business and community college leaders to engage in collaborative partnerships?

3. What is the process of developing ideas and strategies for the implementation of workforce plans?

4. What are the effective WIA programs and initiatives resulting from business and community college collaborative partnerships?
Theoretical Lens and the Inquiry Process

This study has been informed by epistemological and methodological assumptions of interpretive and pragmatic paradigms of research (Cohen et al, 2008; Creswell, 2012; Lukenchuk, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1983) that encapsulate the features of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008), and social constructionism (Gergen, 2009). A qualitative case study is considered a suitable approach to investigate the previously noted research questions (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Chapter three provides a detailed account of the theoretical positioning of this study, its research design, its sources of data, and the methods of data collection and analysis.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this review of the literature is to provide an analysis of the existing scholarship and research studies concerning the WIA, collaborative partnerships between higher education and businesses, and the role of community colleges in workforce development. It is especially important to understand the history and development of the conceptual basis of the WIA in the context of this study. The WIA represents a wide-ranging overhaul of the United States workforce system. Its purpose includes providing participants with increased employment opportunities, enhancing their workforce readiness, and improving their wages. Regarding the WIA’s purpose, it is important to consider how policy directives support the goals and activities of the WIA to meet the needs of jobseekers and the skill requirements of employers.

The analysis of the academic sources is structured around the following themes: (1) the historical context of workforce development in the United States, (2) the legislative context of the Workforce Investment Act, (3) an overview of the state and local Workforce Investment Boards, (4) the collaboration and partnerships between higher education and businesses, and (5) the historical and global dimensions of community colleges. The discussion and analysis of these themes provide the broad context for this study and its methodological orientations.
Historical Context of Workforce Development in the United States

The United States Congress has a history of creating workforce development programs to address issues related to high unemployment and workforce training recognizing that better prepared individuals are needed to enhance the economic vitality of the nation. These federal laws and policies, which interact in complicated ways (Macro, Almandsmith, & Hague, 2003), were designed to assist individuals in acquiring employability and occupational skills. These systems and initiatives include preparing individuals for the workforce, promoting industries that contribute to a states’ economic base, and encouraging collaborations with higher educational institutions. The programs highlighted in this paper do not represent an exhaustive list of all the ways in which the federal government has provided assistance for services related to workforce training and education; they are samples of programs that called for an integrated system for workforce development.

Federally Funded Workforce Programs

The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 represents the foundation of a vocational education funding system for promoting trained workers and it included many provisions that helped construct vocational education (Kremen, 1974). A significant part of this legislation was the creation of a federal board for vocational education for the purpose of establishing federal-state-local agency partnerships to operate and oversee vocational programs (Rich, 2010). The creation of the Smith-Hughes Act was the result of a study authorized by President Woodrow Wilson. The study found that less than one percent of individuals who engaged in agriculture and in manufacturing had the appropriate skills needed for the job (Patterson, n.d.). To address the workforce issues of the time, the
Smith-Hughes Act created a Federal Board of Vocational Education to develop and administer the operation of vocational training with state boards. The WIA targeted individuals over the age of 14 and it was aimed at employment preparation, not academic education (Wonacott, 2003).

The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 was established in response to high unemployment during the Great Depression. The Wagner-Peyser Act created a countrywide system of public employment offices referred as Employment Service (ES). The Employment Service placed emphasis on providing an array of occupational services related to labor exchange services. The Employment Service was designed to provide assistance in matching employer requirements with job seekers’ experiences, developing workforce skills, assisting employers with special recruitments needs, and helping individual workers after layoffs. The federal-state partnership developed under the Wagner-Peyser Act continues to exist to help job seekers and employers. However, in 1998, the WIA amended the Wagner-Peyser Act. Therefore, the Employment Service is part of the One Stop services delivery system under the WIA (O'Leary & Eberts, 2008).

“To promote the establishment and maintenance of a national system of public employment offices, the United States Employment Service shall be established and maintained within the Department of Labor” (Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, 2013, para. 1). To the present day, this legislation and its subsequent amendments govern much of the funding for the mandatory services provided by U.S. Department of Labor Employment Services.

In the early 1960s, new legislation impacted both the Smith-Hughes Act and the Wagner-Peyser Act. The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 (MDTA)
extended the responsibility of the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service to the
identification of the training needs of unemployed youth and adults. Members of
Congress passed the legislation in an effort to address one major purpose: to retrain
workers for new industries. The MDTA was later converted into a job-training program
that primarily focused on economically disadvantaged individuals (Kremen, 1974).

With the Vocational Education Act of 1963, an expansion of the Smith-Hughes
Act, individuals received training in occupations that were in high demand. The focus of
this law was to extend, improve, and maintain existing vocational programs. It is
important to note that this legislation was designed to assist those persons who had
difficulty succeeding in regular vocational education programs due to their
socioeconomic status or academic abilities (Wolfe, n.d.).

Approximately a decade later, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act
of 1973 (CETA) consolidated MDTA with the independent vocational programs. The
Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, designed to decentralize control of
federally sponsored job-training programs, gave local units of government considerable
autonomy to manage basic training components. Ten years into CETA, the federal
government found major issues with the program including corruption and
mismanagement (Workforce Development Overview, 2012). In 1982, the Job Training
Partnership Act (JTPA) replaced CETA.

The Job Training Partnership Act amended the strict administrative role held by
the U.S. Employment Service over the state agencies as granted by the Wagner-Peyser
Act. The JTPA focused on assisting low-income individuals, and it provided a decision-
making role to the private sector. In addition, JTPA created a new local governance
structure titled “Private Industry Councils or PICs.” The new law eliminated public sector employment, which had been a significant part of CETA, and began funding states and local areas by the national Employment Service to develop and implement one-stop shops for workforce services.

**Problems Persist**

Efforts by the federal government to provide employment and training services to respond to the needs of the labor market have not always produced results due to the fragmentation of services and the lack of accountability (Herman, 1999). Critics of federal workforce programs perceived these programs as bureaucratic and delivered with a piecemeal approach. Many men and women looking for opportunities often settled for available programs rather than seeking choices that best met their needs. Providers of these workforce programs acknowledged that workforce programs were wasteful, duplicative, and complicated for the average customer. According to Herman (1999), various legislative reports have documented the many issues encountered with federal programs. For example, job seekers were not always provided with timely and accurate information because most of the programs were “splintered and disorganized” and, regardless of their performance, institutions working with federal workforce programs received funding.

These workforce programs existed at a time when unskilled workers had ample employment opportunities in this country. The jobs available ranged from farming, to mining, to oil, and to manufacturing jobs. Although the wages were less for unskilled workers, individuals could easily move from one industry to another and earn a decent salary. However, during the 1980s and 1990s, the wage gap between skilled and
unskilled workers began to rise and the trend has continued through the 21st century (Karoly & Panis, 2004).

**Legislative Context of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998**

To address the issues and inefficiencies of previous federal workforce programs, Congress enacted the Workforce Investment Act in 1998 to “consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs in the United States, and for other purposes” (Workforce Investment Act of 1998, 1998, p. 1), replacing JTPA. Administered by the United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training (ETA), the Workforce Investment Act is the largest source of federal funding for workforce development activities in the nation (Moran, 2013). Since the onset of the Great Recession, which began in December 2007, the Federal government has spent more than $11 billion to prepare individuals for the labor market (Moran, 2013).

The Workforce Investment Act involves a framework that incorporates career training and counseling, education, and initiatives for economic development. The Workforce Investment Act replaced multiple existing workforce programs with state formula grants and established the countrywide network of locally administered “One-Stop Centers” where both individuals and employers have access to job training and employment and recruitment services, respectively. The One Stop Centers also serve to support other programs administered through the U.S. Department of Labor and other agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education (Herman, 1999). As a requirement of the WIA, Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) were established in every state and in local areas in the United States. WIBs are
charged with broad policy leadership for the planning, operations, and infrastructure of workforce programs. In addition, local WIBs oversee the operations of the One Stop Centers. Precisely, the Workforce Investment Act was created to: provide workforce investment activities through statewide and local workforce investment systems that increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants and increase occupational skill attainment by participants and, as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation. (U.S. Congress, 1998)

Although the purpose of the legislation is to provide the unemployed with job training aligned to high-growth and emerging industry sectors, the workforce investment system has not met expectations. It has failed to keep up with changing economic conditions and little is known about who and how people are being helped (Kaleba & Gragg, 2011; Moran 2013). Furthermore, there is little evidence of the effectiveness of the overall program, which was designed to prepare citizens for the jobs of today and to meet marketplace demands (Decker & Berk, 2011; Glazer, Alexandre, & Ponte, 2008; Howle & Cordiner, 2012; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Moran 2013). One major issue found in the legislation is the mandate for a “work first” approach to workforce development (Shaw & Goldrick-Rab, 2006). Put differently, placement in employment is the number one goal of the services provided under the WIA, Title I (Bradley, 2013). The concentration on placing dislocated workers in jobs is problematic. Individuals have to prove that they are applying for jobs. This requirement forces individuals to apply for jobs that are above their qualifications. The unnecessary amount of time individuals spend looking for jobs that are above their abilities reduces their labor market prospects.
The unsuccessful and exhaustive job search is “rewarded” with Individual Training Accounts (ITA). Once individuals “prove” that they have exhausted their options for employment, they receive ITA “vouchers,” which allow them to receive training from a list of eligible providers (Bradley, 2013; Shaw & Goldrick-Rab, 2006). This method assumes that individuals understand their aptitudes and their educational needs. Another flaw in the system is that participants are directed to use their Individual Training Accounts with training providers that may lack the appropriate credentials (National Skills Coalition, 2013).

The mandated sequence of services under the WIA lacks flexibility. The one-size-fits-all approach prevents unemployed participants from accessing the services that benefit them. Although the WIA requires mandated and non-mandated partners, the legislation does not regulate collaborative partnerships with employers and among partners. For instance, a recent study found that the WIA’s strategy does not consider the context of current workforce development from either the employers’ viewpoint or the incumbent workers’ perspective (Hopkins, Monaghan, & Hansman, 2009). In 2005, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget gave the WIA programs an overall ranking of “adequate.” Although the report indicated that the WIA had exceeded its major goals of assisting individuals with their employment needs, the program received relatively low grades for its evaluation efforts. This report and others indicate that the WIA’s evaluations and reporting lack rigor and scope to determine the real value and impact on participants’ training, employment, and earnings (Heinrich, Mueser, Troske, & Benus, 2008; Moran 2013). Therefore, the key measurement systems found in programs
administered under the WIA such as audits, evaluations, and investigative reports lack consistency, performance, and accountability.

**Workforce Investment Act: Guiding Principles**

The Workforce Investment Act’s major provisions were “to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs in the United States, and for other purposes” (Workforce Investment Act, of 1998. Public Law 105-220, p.1). To improve the existing employment and training system, the WIA called for the development of Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to oversee the implementation of the WIA at the state and local levels. The WIA required the State Workforce Investment Board to assist the governor in setting up the system establishing accountability processes and creating local workforce investment areas. To accomplish its goals, the Workforce Investment Act explicitly outlined the member composition of state and local Workforce Investment Boards. Furthermore, it defined the services to be provided to unskilled and unemployed individuals. Educating and training individuals in emergent industries is an essential element of the responsibility of state and local WIBs. This requirement, the creators of the WIA believed, could be accomplished through the formation of collaborative partnerships among providers of the WIA, the private sector, and educational institutions. The WIA underscored the importance businesses play in workforce development and stipulated that businesses make up the majority of the members in both the state and local Workforce Investment Boards. Collaborative partnerships were viewed as essential in streamlining existing workforce services and programs and providing them at the One Stop Centers. This new model
would improve the services and training provided under the previous JTPA federal legislation (Herman, 1999).

In addition to replacing and amending other related workforce programs, the WIA created an all-inclusive workforce investment system. Its main objective placed emphasis on quality customer service to ensure Americans were equipped with the tools needed to manage their careers. Most importantly, the legislation stressed the need to assist U.S. companies in finding skilled workers. The WIA is based on seven guiding principles:

1. Streamlining services through improved integration in the One Stop delivery system, or One Stop Centers, through better coordination of activities and information.

2. Empowering individuals in several ways including offering eligible adults financial assistance to access Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) at approved educational institutions and improving the dissemination of information and services to individuals.

3. Providing universal access to information about job vacancies, career options, student financial aid, employment trends, and training on how to search for a job at the One Stop Centers

4. Strengthening accountability for increasing employment, retention, and earnings of participants so as to reduce welfare dependency.

5. Involving the private sector by allowing businesses to serve as “board of directors,” to take part in strategic planning and policy development, and to manage the local workforce investment system.
6. Giving flexibility to state and local boards. The governor and chief elected officials have the flexibility to innovate and to implement comprehensive workforce systems designed to meet labor market’s needs.

7. Improving youth programs through increased connection to local labor market needs and community youth programs to provide and improve academic pathways.

**Workforce Investment Act Structure: The Five Titles**

To fulfill its mission, the Workforce Investment Act is comprised of five titles that outline the operational aspects of the legislation and any subsequent amendments.

Title I authorizes the new Workforce Investment System. Title II reauthorizes Adult Education and Literacy Programs. Title III contains amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act, which ensures linkages with other programs and authorizes the Twenty-First Century Workforce Commission. Title IV contains amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. Title V contains general provisions relating to the WIA (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012).

Title I is comprised of two subtitles or sections. Subtitle A, Workforce Investment Definitions, presents a list of definitions and the related terms used throughout the legislation. Subtitle B, Statewide and Local Workforce Investment Systems, details the purpose and the functional framework of the Workforce Investment Boards wherein, these boards serve as the nexus for businesses and workforce providers to provide management and policy direction. A major purpose of Title I is developing a wide range of timely workforce development policies designed to launch collaborations and partnerships that embrace secondary and postsecondary education. A brief
description of each follows:

In Title I, the Workforce Investment Act authorizes state and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). The WIA develops a formula by which funds for youth, adult, and dislocated workers programs are provided. In addition, it calls for performance metrics. Funding is funneled from the federal government through the states to the local level. Lastly, it authorizes the country’s youth workforce development and One Stop Center delivery system. At the center of the WIA is Title I because it establishes the framework through which all federal funding related to workforce development flows and is coordinated.

Title II, Adult Education and Literacy, authorizes the Adult and Education and Family Literacy Act and is administered by the United States Department of Education through grants to the states. The primary purpose of the WIA as stated in Title II is to develop collaboration among all levels of government to provide adult education and literacy services. Specifically, Title II assists adults to become literate, to gain the skills necessary for employment and to become self-reliant, and to assists adult parents to gain postsecondary education. To achieve its goals, Title II provides assistance to individuals to access basic education services, including a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. To receive funding for these programs, education providers must be connected to One Stop Centers.

Title III re-authorizes the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933. Title III is administered through the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. The Wagner-Peyser Act was the labor-exchange program whose services were previously managed through a network of unemployment services until the authorization of the
The Workforce Investment Act’s five Titles function as the guiding framework designed to provide comprehensive services, education, and employment services at a single location, One Stop Centers. The services provided under the legislation range from skills assessment to information on employment and training opportunities, to job search and placement assistance, and up-to-date information on job vacancies. One Stop Centers are designed to meet the workforce needs of the communities they serve (Herman, 1999). As previously stated, Title I establishes the framework through which all federal funding related to workforce development flows and is coordinated. The following overview of Title I puts the WIA’s organization into a context that explains the complexity of its governance and operations infrastructure.
workforce development. The primary provisions include the establishment of:

- State and local Workforce Investment Boards and State Plans
- Local Workforce Investment Areas
- Local Workforce Investment Boards, Youth Councils, and Local Plans
- One Stop Delivery Systems (One Stop Centers)
- Eligible Training Providers
- Systems for the Allocation of Funds
- Youth Services, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Services
- Performance Metrics

As intended by the individuals who crafted and approved the WIA, the WIA Title I provides federal funding to support the delivery of individual training and support services, determines governance and operations infrastructure, and sets performance and accountability standards for Title I-funded programs.

**State and Local Workforce Investment Boards and State Plans**

Workforce Investment Boards are business-led policy and decision-making units responsible for creating a workforce development system that meets the workforce needs of the labor market. Therefore, composition of the Workforce Investment Boards calls for the majority of the members to represent the business community. The remaining members comprise representatives from chief local elected official offices, labor leaders, and representatives from community colleges and other organizations that have experience in the delivery of workforce investment activities. States are required to develop and submit a five-year, detailed strategic plan consistent with the requirements of the WIA to the U.S. Secretary of Labor for approval.
There are two types of Workforce Investment Boards: State Workforce Investment Boards and Local Workforce Investment Boards (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). Workforce Investment Boards are established for every state and local area in the United States and its territories. There are 578 local WIBs. The boundaries of areas served by WIBs vary, but every part of the United States is within the jurisdiction of a Workforce Investment Board (O'Leary & Straits, 2000). The Workforce Investment Act expects local and state boards to address local, regional, and state labor markets issues. For this reason, the responsibilities are divided between state and local officials.

**State Workforce Investment Boards Responsibilities**

At the state level, governors administer the funds flowing into the state. Governors designate a state department to receive and allocate the funds. Governors appoint the members and serve on the State Workforce Investment Board. Governors create and submit a strategic plan to the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration for approval. The state plan must include a list of identified key strategic partners and strategies to meet the workforce needs of both employers and employees. Although state legislators do not have direct responsibility, the legislation requires the state’s legislature to approve the receipt and distribution of the WIA funds, approve the workforce investment system plan, and have four representatives from the legislature, two from the State House and two from the State Senate, to serve on the state WIB. There are 55 state boards, one in each of the 50 states and 5 U.S. territories. To provide context for the required collaborative approach, this section emphasizes WIA’s membership requirements:

- The Governor;
• Two members of each chamber of the State Legislature appointed by the appropriate presiding officers of each such chamber;
• Representatives appointed by the Governor who are representatives of business in the state as owners of businesses, chief executives or operating officers of businesses, and other business executives or employers with optimum policymaking or hiring authority, including members of local boards who represent businesses with employment opportunities that reflect the employment opportunities of the state and are appointed from among individuals nominated by state business organizations and business trade associations;
• Chief elected officials representing both cities and counties where appropriate;
• Representatives of labor organizations who have been nominated by state labor federations;
• Representatives of individuals and organizations that have experience with respect to youth activities and representatives of individuals and organizations that have experience and expertise in the delivery of workforce investment activities, including chief executive officers of community colleges and community-based organizations within the state;
• Lead state agency officials who have responsibility for the programs and activities
• Local chief elected officials (CEOs);
- The state agency officials responsible for carrying out “one-stop” operations and other representatives and state agency officials as the governor may designate.

**Local Workforce Investment Boards**

The governor designates local workforce investment areas. Chief elected officials (CEOs) are designated in a local operating agreement that covers the local workforce investment area. The CEOs of local WIBs administer the funds flowing to the local level. The CEOs appoint members to the local WIBs in accordance with the WIA’s membership requirements. The Workforce Investment Board members are encouraged to work closely with the CEO in the planning and implementation of the public workforce investment program and services. As mandated by the WIA, services are delivered at one single location, at One Stop Centers. Workforce investment plans must be based on local labor market needs and be aligned with local priorities as required by the WIA.

Paramount to the Workforce Investment Act is the requirement for strong collaborations among all service providers and the private sector. Local Workforce Investment Board required composition includes:

1. Representatives of business in the local area, who: (a) are owners of businesses, chief executives or operating officers of businesses, and other business executives or employers with optimum policymaking or hiring authority; (b) represent businesses with employment opportunities that reflect the employment opportunities of the local area; and (c) are appointed from among individuals nominated by local business organizations and business trade associations;
2. Representatives of local educational entities, such as representatives of local educational agencies, local school boards, entities providing adult education and literacy activities, and postsecondary educational institutions, including representatives of community colleges where such entities exist. These representatives are selected from among individuals nominated by regional or local educational agencies, institutions, or organizations representing local educational entities;

3. Representatives of labor organizations, for a local area in which employees are represented by labor organizations, who have been nominated by local labor federations, or, for a local area in which no employees are represented by such organizations, other representatives of employees;

4. Representatives of community-based organizations including organizations representing individuals with disabilities and veterans, for a local area in which such organizations are present, and private sector economic development entities;

5. Representatives of each of the One Stop Centers and may include such other individuals or representatives of entities that the chief elected official in the local area may determine to be appropriate.

**Workforce Investment Act Requirements**

**Youth councils.** The Workforce Investment Act provides funding for youth training and employment programs to address the continuing job crisis affecting young people who are 16 to 24 years of age. To address youth unemployment, the legislation also required WIBs to appoint Youth Councils (Workforce Investment Act, 1998). The
Youth Council, the only committee required by the WIA, is a subdivision of the local WIBs. Youth Councils are charged with the development of workforce plans related to youth, the recommendation of eligible youth service providers, and the coordination of local youth programs. The main purpose of the WIA’s focus on youth services is to assist youth achieving academic and employment success through effective and comprehensive workforce and education activities. These opportunities for youth include: improving their overall education, employability, and leadership skills; linking them to employers; ongoing mentoring and support services; and providing them with incentives for achievement.

**One stop delivery systems.** These centers, branded “One-Stop Career Centers” in public law and also known as “one-stops,” were piloted in most of the states a few years before the enactment of the WIA (Glickman, Aldinger, & Roberts, 2010). The name One Stop Centers fits their purpose; they were designed as spaces for individuals to receive a wide range of workforce services in one location. Likewise, these spaces were created for employers to easily access labor pools. A key aspect of the WIA’s requirements is the “behind the scenes” integration of services. The average customer is unaware that the services and funding sources are the work of many entities working together, such as workforce providers, education providers, businesses, and legislators. This invisible structure is deliberate and required by the WIA (Glickman et al., 2010).

**Eligible training providers.** The WIA established requirements for training providers. Post-secondary educational institutions certified under the Higher Education Act that provide two or four-year degree or certificates and those companies that are registered under the National Apprenticeship Act are automatically eligible to receive
funds after they apply to the local WIB. Other non-accredited training companies may be approved for initial eligibility as determined by the governor. The law states that all providers must meet performance criteria as established by the governor to maintain eligibility.

**Allocation of funds.** The Workforce Investment Act funds are allocated to the states by the U.S. Department of Labor and through the states, to local workforce investment areas or WIBs by a multifaceted formula that takes into consideration factors such as an area’s population, unemployment rates, and areas that have high numbers of disadvantaged youth.

**Youth services, adult, and dislocated worker programs.** The Workforce Investment Act placed emphasis on the developmental needs of extremely low-income youth. The services are structured around delivery models designed to increase a young person’s long-term employability. The WIA placed emphasis on the three subpopulations of youth, adults, and dislocated workers so that these programs ensure the eligibility of all job seekers.

**Performance metrics.** State and local WIBs follow WIA’s performance metrics established by the legislation. These performance metrics are discussed between states and their respective regional offices of the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration as well as with local WIBs to determine performance goals. In addition, the governor has discretionary funding to develop initiatives or projects that are not covered under the required services. Additionally, funds may be used to address acute layoffs in the state. The Workforce Investment Act’s core performance measures serve as guides that help set agreed upon performance goals on a State and local level.
These measures also ensure comparability of state performance results to maintain objectivity in measuring results for incentive and sanction determinations, and they provide information for system-wide reporting and evaluation for program improvement (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.).

The Workforce Investment Act’s core performance measures are distributed among WIA’s programs. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the Adult Program, the Dislocated Worker Program, and the Older Youth Program for people who are 19 to 21 years of age have the following performance measures:

- entry into unsubsidized employment;
- retention in unsubsidized employment six months after entry into the employment;
- earnings received in unsubsidized employment six months after entry into the employment; and
- attainment of a recognized credential relating to achievement of educational skills, which may include attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or occupational skills, by participants who enter unsubsidized employment.

The Older Youth Program performance measures regarding attainment of a recognized credential include participants who enter postsecondary education, advanced training, or unsubsidized employment.

The Younger Youth program for those who are 14 to 18 years of age has the following performance measures:
• attainment of basic skills and, as appropriate, work readiness or occupational skills;

• attainment of secondary school diplomas and their recognized equivalents; and

• placement and retention in postsecondary education, advanced training, military service, employment, or qualified apprenticeships.

Across Funding Streams, the following performance measures are applied:

• customer satisfaction for participants, and

• customer satisfaction for employers.

**Intersection of Mandated and Non-Mandated Programs in the WIBs**

The WIA defines a number of mandatory partners and non-mandated partners in the One Stop system. Mandated partners are required to make core services available at One Stop Centers, provide funding for the operation of One Stop Centers, and provide representation on local WIBs. Non-mandated representatives are representatives of postsecondary programs, most likely community colleges, not included under the Perkins Act and representatives from the private sector. Therefore, as detailed in Title I-B, Chapter I, and Section III of WIA, State Workforce Investment Boards illustrate the framework for the creation of collaborative partnerships across sectors.

**Mandated Partners**

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 enumerates and defines mandated partners in the One Stop system as the following:
• programs authorized under Title I (employment and training), Title II (adult education and literacy), Title III (the Wagner-Peyser Act), and Title IV (Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) of the WIA;
• the Older American Community Service Employment Program authorized by Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965;
• postsecondary vocational education activities under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act;
• veteran employment and training programs under Chapter 41, Title 38 of the U.S. Code;
• Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs under Chapter 2 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974;
• employment and training activities under the Community Services Block Grant and employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and
• programs authorized by state unemployment compensation laws.

Non-Mandated Partners

The Workforce Investment Act (Source, year?) continues to clarify partners in the One Stop system by defining non-mandated partners as:

• programs offered under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps;
• The National and Community Service Act;
• other federal, state, or local programs; and
• private sector programs

The definition of mandated and non-mandated partners is a vital element of the WIA. As affirmed by Alexis Herman, Secretary of Labor, the WIA placed emphasis on establishing meaningful and genuine collaborations at all levels and among all stakeholders (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013).

**Workforce Investment Act: Quality of Performance**

Early in its implementation, the Workforce Investment Act encountered challenges addressing job seekers and labor market needs due to the inability of providers to build collaborations. For example, a study conducted by the Social Policy Research Associates (SPRA) found that local workforce areas were unable to engage the private sector and involve businesses in a significant way. In addition, the study found that local workforce areas lacked trust and credibility with businesses. Survey participants of One Stop Centers indicated that their goal was to promote services to employers through effective marketing (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). Their response implied that building relationships was not a priority.

A study that investigated providers and planners implementing the WIA found that the WIA’s design does not take into consideration the context of current workforce development from either the employees’ or employers’ perspective (Hopkins et al., 2009). On the other hand, the WIA deemed building collaborative partnerships between higher education and businesses a critical component for workforce development initiatives (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.).
Reports on the evaluations and analyses of the WIA programs continuously emphasize the inefficiencies of the WIA. For instance, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that collaboration remains a challenge with local WIBs. To increase collaborative partnerships with employers and other partners, the GAO (2012b) recommended improved data collection on WIBs to better support the capacity of the system. The Workforce Investment Act encouraged employer engagement in its structure by, among other tasks, calling for it to supply employers with qualified employees through the One Stop Centers. Another report conducted by the GAO in 2005, found that half of the employers surveyed were unaware of the local One Stop Centers (Nilsen, 2006). Although the WIA placed emphasis on assisting youth with training and unemployment, research conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2004) found that schools and workforce officials rarely connect high school dropouts with their services. The author of the report recommended increased engagement to improve services to youth.

According to a GAOs report conducted in December 2013, the longstanding, systemic issues of the WIA are difficult to address due to the inconsistencies and incomplete reporting from the state and local Workforce Investment Boards to the U.S. Department of Labor. Without accurate reporting, “policymakers, program officials and other stakeholder have an incomplete picture of the number of adults and dislocated workers served, their characteristics, and the type and level of services received” (Moran, 2013, p. 34).

Not many would argue with the overall opinion that there is a skills mismatch in the nation. For example, several studies conducted by employment search service
providers found that there is a lack of qualified workers. Employers surveyed reported that their needs are not being met. For instance, a recent survey found that 49% of the employers had difficulty filling jobs. The skills gap in the nation is frequently attributed to a lack of applicants, 55%; and overall lack of experience among candidates, 44% (Houchin, 2012). In May 2013, a survey conducted by Manpower, Inc. reported that 39% of U.S. employers cannot fill positions because most of the applicants are unqualified (Manpower Group, 2013). In July 2013, CareerBuilder discovered that more than a third of hiring professionals currently have positions that have remained open for at least 12 weeks. This study was based on surveys of more than 2,000 hiring managers and human resource professionals. Many of the available positions are in high-growth, specialized occupations, which require highly skilled workers (Grasz, 2013). Another workforce study of 500 representatives from successful businesses reported that close to half, 49%, of graduates are less prepared for the workforce than they were 15 years ago (Holmes, 2012).

Some people believe the challenges found in today’s labor market are the result of poor education. According to results from similar surveys, participants blame higher educational institutions for what they see as poor performance. For example, half of those who participated in the Chronicle of Higher Education and American Public Media’s Marketplace study said they had difficulty finding recent qualified graduates to fill job vacancies. Narrowly, a third of those surveyed gave colleges fair to poor grades for producing successful workers. In addition, survey participants stated that those applicants with bachelor’s degrees did not have analytical and basic business acumen skills, such as adaptability, communication, and operational functions of a company,
required for the job (The Chronicle of Higher Education and American Public Media’s Marketplace)

Similarly, labor market research indicates that the United States is facing critical challenges in meeting labor market demands. Both the high-skilled job vacancies and the high unemployment rates are obvious signs of the nation’s labor market challenges.

Re-Authorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

W. Edwards Deming once said that when a job or position in a company becomes out-of-date, the workers holding those positions should be retrained (Neave, 1987). The same concept applies for the Workforce Investment Act. The WIA has become out-of-date and it has not met its commitment to ensure the nation’s workers receive the services and supports they need for employment (Kaleba & Gragg, 2011). The authorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 expired in 2003. In the last 15 years, there were countless attempts to reauthorize the nation’s workforce system. Through what many believe to be an unprecedented non-partisan collaborative effort, Congress reauthorized WIA in July 2014.

Most recently, the President of the United States, Barrack Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (H.R. 803) on July 22, 2014. The Workforce Investment Act was enacted in 1998 in an effort to streamline and enhance the federal job training system. The WIA had been up for re-authorization since 2003. The revamping of the WIA legislation answers the call to action voiced by many legislators, workforce development, and education leaders as outlined in the literature review. The evaluative research suggested that the WIA’s programs encountered many challenges,
preventing workforce providers from successfully addressing the needs of the labor market. The WIOA takes effect on July 1, 2015.

Although this new legislation contains a number of upgrades, this section only highlights those areas relevant to this study. The WIOA retains the basic structure of the workforce delivery systems, but it does change the mandated structure. The number of mandatory slots, for example, has been condensed and as a result, community colleges are only optional members of the state WIB. Also, the WIOA enhances coordination with the needs of employers by aligning workforce development programs with economic development and education initiatives. Additionally, the WIOA reorganizes the accountability process by creating six core indicators that are common across programs. Indicators include the percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during second and fourth quarters after exit, median earnings for those participants, as well as the tracking of progress and attainment of a postsecondary credential, diploma, or its equivalent. Furthermore, the WIOA eliminates the current sequence of services that stipulates individuals can only receive training services if they first complete core services. Lastly, the WIOA places a greater emphasis on career pathways by supporting participants’ co-enrollment in developmental education and training programs to increase their chances of success. The enhancements made in the upgraded federal workforce system, or the WIOA, might address the many issues found with the former workforce system, the WIA, and outlined in the literature review.

**Collaboration and Partnerships in Higher Education and Businesses**

According to Carnevale et al. (2012), postsecondary credentials and training have become more important than ever. Yet, the United States, which was once ranked
number one in the world, now ranks 18th in education among the top 24 industrialized
countries (Loades, 2011). Education in the United States continues to deteriorate. More
than one million high school students drop out of school every year (Bellis, 2004).
Improvements in education and workforce are daunting tasks. (Hanleybrown, F., Kania,
J., & Kramer, M. (2012). posited that solutions to problems can be found when leaders
come together to form a centralized structure and a structured process that leads to a
common agenda, shared responsibility, and measurements of supporting activities.

Collaborations in higher education are imperative for personal and organizational
success (Williams, 1998). Government officials and the U.S. Departments of Education
and Labor, philanthropic organizations, and the general public regularly make explicit
statements about the need to increase collaborative partnerships between higher education
and industry. A sample of these calls for collaboration include the community colleges
summits hosted by President Obama and Second Lady Jill Biden following the White
House Summit on Community Colleges at the White House in October 2011, which
focused on collaborative partnerships between community colleges and industry (The
White House, 2011).

Collaboration holds widespread appeal for most sectors of society because it deals
with a process of how people arrive at solving societal problems (Gray, 1989).
Collaboration emphasizes direct and open communication of a group’s common interests,
goals, expectations, beliefs, and visions for the future. When people come together to
discuss an issue, it allows for enhanced creativity and outcomes in the actions and
decisions they make. Collaborations are extensive and occur in all spheres of humanity.
Collaborations are important for individuals and for societies (London, 2010).
Collaborations can lead to partnerships that solve societal problems, revitalize economically depressed areas, create joint ventures among businesses, and address workforce issues (Cleary & Fichtner, 2005; London, 2010).

Some samples of collaborations include public-private partnerships, school-community partnerships, and regional collaborations. Hodge and Greve (2007) broadly defined public-private partnerships as collaborative organizational cooperative institutional engagements between public and private sectors. Another definition of public-private sector partnerships is “the pooling of resources such as labor and money by organizations that share decision-making power, risks, and benefits in the pursuit of compatible objectives” (Public Private Partnerships, 2008, p. 1). School-community typically means that a group of people such as individuals, businesses, and institutions come together to improve the welfare and vitality of a public school and its community (School-Community, 2013). Regional collaborations are defined by joint responsibility of all partners, sometimes local governments that are part of a regional effort. Porter (2010) argued that regional collaboration “is, by definition, voluntary. Regional leaders constantly seek win-win opportunities to make the case for regionalism and promote inclusion” (p. 59).

Samples of regional collaborations are the partnerships formed by the WIA. For example, local WIBs bring together local governments, business leaders, and higher educational institutions to promote workforce and economic development and service delivery. Likewise, higher educational institutions frequently develop collaborative partnerships with the state, region, and their communities in order to advance their core missions (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Ryan & Heim, 1997). Community colleges
increasingly collaborate with the private sectors, their interactions with businesses help to build the capacity of faculty, ensure that students graduate with meaningful credentials, and expand the colleges’ presence as economic development partners (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013).

**Collaboration**

According to Carnwell and Carson (2004), the words “collaboration” and “partnership” are often used inter-changeably. At times these words are used in the same sentence or paragraph. The authors broadly distinguish between when something is a “partnership” and what one does to “collaborate” or work together (Bragg & Russman, 2007; Carnwell & Carson, 2004).

Collaboration, as defined by Gray (1989), is a “process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible” (p. 5). More comprehensive definitions exist. For example, Thomson, Perry, and Miller (2006) defined collaboration based on field research, which included interviews with 20 organizational directors:

Collaboration is a process in which autonomous or semi-autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions. (p. 23)
Partnerships

Glazer et al. (2008) asserted that collaboration and partnership are two unique concepts “with collaboration being one component of a true partnership” (p. 1). Carnwell and Carson (2005) defined partnerships as “a shared commitment, where all partners have a right and an obligation to participate and will be affected equally by the benefits and disadvantages arising from the partnership” (p. 6). Partnerships evolve through a process that is developed as groups, people working together, mature. Partnerships evolve through personal involvement and the time commitment of each one of the people in the group. In other words, trust is established when members of the group begin to participate to form a genuine partnership (Carnwell & Carson, 2005).

Working together or collaborating to form genuine partnerships is not a simple and straightforward process. It requires analyzing the situation or the problem a group is trying to solve, identifying the key issues involved, and having a shared vision of the goals (London, 2010). Amey, Eddy, and Ozaki (2007) stated that there are several elements to consider when developing partnerships: (a) antecedents, (b) motivation, (c) context, and (d) the partnership itself. Antecedents result from the context and the issues involving each partner or the reasons for getting involved. These reasons range from external forces, to policies, to prior relationships, to the lack of resources, and to the need to solve real life problems. Fundamental in successful partnerships is the shared understanding of each partner’s role and responsibilities. Most importantly, the intersection between motivation and context are important in the development of a partnership (Amey et al., 2007). The reasons for developing collaborations that can result in partnerships vary and encompass a wide variety of activities. For example,
government mandates (policy directives), grant funding initiatives, and community needs are samples of context that motivate the need for partnering (Gray, 1989). Although each person or group comes with their own motivation to participate, these motivations should be of mutual benefit. A true partnership begins when everyone in the group starts trusting each other and actively participating in the activities established by the group. Establishing partnerships where all individuals have a voice, trust each other; understand their mission, their values, and their motives for actively participating affirm their contributions and investment in the partnership (Gergen, 2009). According to Amey et al. (2007), a key element in a partnership is the identification of a champion. A champion is the person who advocates for the initiative. Commonly, the champion believes in the partnership and its goals. In addition to having a champion, goals need to be established and evaluated. Lastly, communication and ongoing feedback and support is needed for sustaining partnerships. The term “collaborative partnership” will be used throughout the remainder of this paper when discussing collaborations that result in effective partnerships. Although there is a lack of scholarly work about how collaborative partnerships are created and about the outcomes that result from these partnerships, there are some samples that illustrate how collaborative partnerships work.

Sleezer, Gularte, Walder, and Cook (2004) conducted a study to investigate how business and university leaders work together to develop a skilled workforce initiative. Specifically, the exploratory case study investigated the collaborative partnerships that were instrumental in developing an educational infrastructure for the high-tech workforce in Tulsa, Oklahoma. University, business leaders, and elected officials had a vision for making Oklahoma a model for collaboration and innovation. Feedback from members of
the group served as the blueprint for the direction of the information technology program. Those who participated in the study reported that members of the project were involved and committed. For example, businesses contributed by providing equipment, expertise, and internships to students. Alumni provided input on the program. Other stakeholders such as government leaders participated in task force committees and other activities. Although the committees were not formally organized, nor purposely planned, the networks formed were meaningful and powerful. Members of the network used personal and professional skills to negotiate mutually beneficial educational programs. For example, business leaders took notice of the amount of time it took university leaders to accomplish tasks at the university. They expressed their concern about what they perceived as the university’s bureaucratic and inefficient processes. Therefore, they “put pressure” on higher education leaders to expedite processes. On the other hand, faculty members expressed frustrations with businesses’ lack of understanding about the process of developing curriculum. However, members of the group took the time to explain the core requirements for a degree. Despite the differences in their worldviews, they successfully negotiated understanding within and across academic disciplines and across businesses. Some of the faculty members stated that working in collaboration with others was instinctively rewarding. Sleezer et al. (2004) concluded that those who believe in the benefits of working together are more effective in developing collaborative partnerships than those who prefer telling others how things should be done.

For years, institutions have attempted to solve problems by forming collaborations. However these collaborations do not always produce the intended results,
(Hanleybrown, Kania & Kramer, 2012; Thomson & Perry, 2006), are not easily established, and can be challenging to sustain (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

For instance, Farrell (2008) conducted a case study to investigate the outcome of a community college and a workforce education program that received Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) funding to provide employment services to welfare-to-work participants. Staff from the community college and the PRWORA program engaged in a formalized partnership agreement. However, the partnership failed due to the lack of clear goals and expectations. The workforce development staff did not understand what was required of them. Likewise, the community college staff made assumptions regarding what the participants of the program needed. The lack of knowledge about what each partner brought to the table prevented them from providing meaningful services to the community. The author of the study provided recommendations for effective collaborative partnerships. The suggestions included conducting an assessment of the community’s needs before creating the collaboration, getting to know the participants in the program, outlining the responsibilities of each partner, and creating a process to evaluate both the partnership and the services provided to participants (Farrell, 2008). Collaborative partnerships require careful planning, and implementation. Often collaborations fail because the members of the group are disorganized and do not understand the process of working together (Gray, 1989).

Another study, which was conducted by Netsandama (2010) to examine the perceptions of community stakeholders regarding the needs and expectations and the quality of the partnership with the university, found that the collaboration failed due to
communication and commitment issues. The qualitative case study involved surveying the participants in a community engagement initiative of the University of Venda (UNIVEN) in Thohoyandou in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The initiative’s goals were to integrate community engagement into the core businesses of the university in an effort to reduce poverty through teaching, learning, and research. The participants in the study indicated that university representatives failed to develop meaningful relationships with the community. They perceived a lack of commitment from university representatives due to their random visits and their assumptions about their needs. The poor quality of the partnership was demonstrated by the participants’ perception that university representatives lacked responsibility and respect for them (Netshandama, 2010).

Central to any collaborative partnership is the concept of shared power. All stakeholders should actively participate in defining a problem and in determining the action steps to solve it (Gray, 1989). Obstacles to successful partnerships surface when a common agenda is not established and when partners’ motivation for joining is not clear (Gray, 1989). Collaborative partnerships are not random interactions that can be formed informally. For partnerships to survive, individuals need to understand their role, the purpose of the partnerships, and the benefits that bind them (Gray, 1989). True collaborative partnerships require time and commitment from all members of the group (Carnwell & Carson, 2008; Thomson & Perry, 2006). Collaborative partnerships are built to find solutions to new problems and should be evaluated on a regular basis. Most importantly, they should not be treated with a one-size-fits-all approach. Collaborative partnerships have specific functions. To build successful collaborative partnerships, the
members of a group should allow time for a partnership to develop and must give it the
time and equilibrium it requires to succeed (Carnwell & Carson, 2005; Gray, 1989).

Systematic and sustainable partnerships between education and industry are
needed to address the skills gap of the nation. Although there is considerable research
literature on partnerships between universities and industry that focus on research
initiatives and on partnerships with K–12 institutions, little has been documented on
collaborative partnerships between community colleges and businesses (Amey, 2010;
Thune, 2011).

Beginning in their early years, community colleges have worked in collaboration
with businesses and industry to achieve a basic mission, which was workforce
development. To effectively assist both students and employers, a collaborative approach
is not only needed, but is also essential. Providing academic testing and certifications for
a myriad of occupations is not a job educational institutions can do alone (Gumport,
Altbach, & Berdahl, 2011). Truly understanding the labor market and addressing the
needs of today’s labor market require the input of business and industry leaders;
therefore, community colleges often form collaborative partnerships with the private
sector. These colleges have widespread experience engaging businesses and the
community to promote human resources and local economic development (Cleary &
Fichtner, 2005; McKergow & Clarke, 2002). For more than one hundred years,
community colleges have been providing education and workforce assistance. Some
believe that these two-year institutions have found their “niche” for helping learners
acquire skill sets to enter the workforce. Due to the scope of the services they provide,
community colleges make a great workforce partner. They are well positioned to get a
large part of the nation’s workforce back to work, due to their mission of providing affordable and quality education to diverse populations (Darling & Guy, 2013; Hammond, 1996).

Many believe that collaborating is no longer an option but rather a requirement to meet the high demand for skilled workers. Therefore, collaborative partnerships between higher education and businesses and industry are essential to keeping the economy strong (McKergow & Clarke, 2002; Ryan & Heim, 1997). To emphasize, these partnerships are important in today’s complex global society. The education of individuals will highly impact the economic health of local, regional, and the state economies. Therefore, workforce providers must re-focus their strategies to effectively train individuals for the workforce and to help incumbent and displaced workers get the appropriate training to reenter the workforce (Bragg & Russman, 2007). Despite the enthusiastic support for community colleges, there are also critics who believe that these colleges are not doing enough. They believe that cross-sector alignment between their institutions and the public sector could be strengthened to close the skills gaps in emerging industries (Altstadt, 2011).

**Historical and Global Dimensions of Community College and Business Partnerships**

The original vision for junior colleges began with an idea of a two-year preparatory institution to be housed in high schools and in some instances, in separate facilities (Beach, 2011). These institutions were created to accommodate the growing number of high school graduates. Ray Layman Wilbur, president of Stanford University, stated that high school students had an opportunity “to try out” higher education “without great economic advantage and without leaving home after high school graduation” (cited
Wilbur further explained that junior colleges would allow students to:

find out about their own interests and capacities, and help them through the preparatory stages…and for those who have neither the capacity to profit by university instruction nor the necessary financial backing, the chance to round out their education by two years of work of college grade. (Beach, 2011, p. 5)

Community colleges began offering job-training programs to address the unemployment issues during the Great Depression of the 1930s. After World War II, the change from military industries to consumer goods created new, skilled jobs. Also, the return of millions of Americans from World Word II and the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-346, 58 Stat. 284m), commonly known as the G.I. Bill, served as the impetus for additional workforce education options for those returning from war (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013).

The 1960s were a prosperous time for community colleges. The baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, began reaching college age. During that period, the number of colleges nearly doubled and the number of students quadrupled to nearly 2.5 million students (Franco, 2004). Community colleges established their open door policies and their free or low-cost tuition at convenient locations within communities (Franco, 2004). However, their ability to respond to the challenges facing the nation’s workforce would require a collaborative and systematic approach.

In 1988, the Nationwide Commission on the Future of Community Colleges proposed that these colleges build communities by developing collaborations with employers. In addition, they recommended making their institutions available for workforce development (Kasper, 2002). Often the government and the public underscore
the need for community colleges and business to build collaborations for workforce
development as a new concept (The White House, 2012). However, collaborations
between community colleges and businesses have occurred for as long as the two-year
institutions have existed. In fact, businesses were among the biggest proponents of
establishing community colleges. According to a study conducted across the states of
California, Illinois, New York, and Washington, 68% of businesses, firms, and chambers
of commerce supported the establishment of community colleges (Dougherty, 2001).

Over more than 100 years, community colleges have grown tremendously in
number, but their mission has remained intact. Community colleges continue to fulfill
their mission by educating half the country’s undergraduates. According to the AACC,
each year more than 1,200 community colleges are the gateway to the workforce and to
four-year universities. Community colleges account for more than 32% of all new
college students who subsequently enroll in another institution of higher education. The
National Student Clearinghouse reported that 51.9% of all students who transfer from 4-
year public institutions do so to a community college. Additionally, community colleges
annually award 612,915 associate degrees and 328,268 certificates and annually enroll
6.5 million students for credit and another 5 million for noncredit courses (AACC, n.d.).

In addition to providing access to a diverse range of students through their low
tuition costs, community colleges play a key role in training the workforce. Their
contributions include offering industry-recognized credentials. These credentials include
education diplomas, certificates, and degrees such as registered apprenticeship
certificates, occupational licenses, and personnel certifications from industry or
professional associations (Rendon, n.d.).
Approximately 13 million students receive general education and workforce training courses. In the United States, nearly 80% of first responders, police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians, are trained by community colleges. Similarly, community colleges prepare hospital personnel and train more than 50% of new nurses and other health care staff (The College Board, 2008).

In the United States, community colleges enroll 46% of all undergraduates, including: 47% who are African American, 47% who are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 55% and 57%, respectively, who are Hispanic and Native American (The College Board, 2008, p. 5). These percentages indicate that community colleges have a history of serving underrepresented populations. Additionally, community colleges have traditionally served first-generation college students, unemployed individuals, and those who are underemployed. The unemployed benefit from the services offered by community colleges such as low tuitions, open door access, and flexible schedules. Without the services of community colleges, many individuals who come from impoverished backgrounds could never attend college (AACC, 2005).

Summary

For nearly 100 years, the federal government has been responsible for workforce development in the United States and over time, its efforts have evolved beyond the notion of vocational training. The implementation of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) not only brought workforce development to the forefront in states and local communities around the nation, but it also attempted to create a holistic approach to help unemployed Americans. The WIA set robust goals for increasing the skills, employment, retention, and earnings of workforce development participants. Among those goals are...
the responsibilities bestowed upon the states and local workforce investment areas for developing and implementing plans. In addition, the WIA put mechanisms in place to ensure providers of workforce programs work in collaboration with their local communities. For example, federally funded workforce programs, educational institutions (i.e., state and local workforce programs, community colleges, four-year universities, and training companies), elected officials, labor unions, and the private sector are required to work together to build an industry-responsive and a well-coordinated workforce development system.

As evidenced by the federal workforce programs created in past decades, the responsibility for workforce development has rested on the shoulders of the federal government. However, the efforts of the federal government were challenged by the many flaws in the legislation. The studies reviewed suggest that numerous federal workforce programs, including the WIA, have not always been effective. The federal government and unemployed individuals lost time and resources. The lack of accountability, transparency, and the lack of rigor of their measurement systems resulted in not only poor performance, but also the loss of resources from both the government and individuals.

There are clear themes that emerge from the Workforce Investment Act analysis; The implementation of the legislation has (a) encountered challenges engaging stakeholders in meaningful collaborative partnerships, (b) has not taken into consideration the context of current workforce development from either the employee’s and employer’s perspective, and (c) has yet to demonstrate the effectiveness of its
programs to ensure that youth and adults have opportunities to develop and refine their skills.

These findings are problematic at a time of high unemployment. Currently, there are 3.8 million unemployed young adults who need a pathway out of poverty (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). Providing educational and occupational opportunities for young adults is important to help them become productive members of society. Yet, not enough is known about how education and industry work together to assist Americans in need education and employment.

Programs created by the federal government such as the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973, and the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 existed at a time when unprepared individuals had plenty of employment opportunities. Even if these individuals lacked labor market preparation, the likelihood of attaining a job was higher at that time than it is now. Starting in the 1980s, the jobs for unprepared workers began to fade and the wage gap between skilled and unskilled workers began to get wider. This trend has continued (Toossi, 2002).

Numerous studies suggest that the nation suffers from skills gaps. Skills gaps occur where there is a mismatch between available skilled people and the current and emerging needs of industry (Carnevale et al., 2012).

The President of the United States, philanthropic associations, elected officials and others have tried to make the case for ensuring that the nation’s employers fill the 4.0 million job openings across the country (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014) and continuously call for collaborative partnerships between higher
education and businesses. As stated in the WIA, businesses play a key role in the labor market and places emphasis on collaborations among all stakeholders. For example, Title I, Subtitle B of the WIA establishes the purpose and the functional framework of the legislation with the establishment of the Workforce Investment Boards. Both local and state boards serve as the nexus for businesses and workforce providers to provide policy direction. One of the main purposes of Title I is the development of a wide range of timely workforce development policies designed to launch collaborations and partnerships that embrace secondary and postsecondary education. According to the creators of the WIA, building and strengthening partnerships is crucial to creating a labor-industry-responsive and well-coordinated workforce development system.

Collaborations and partnerships are not a new concept. History shows that collaborations have been central to the workforce efforts of this country. However, these collaborations have not always worked and little is known about them. The case studies analyzed suggest that collaborative partnerships are challenging to develop and maintain. According to Gray (1989), collaborative partnerships do not work when members of a group are not skilled in the process of working together. For example, effective groups share a common agenda, demonstrate leadership and commitment, communicate well with each other and evaluate their performance on ongoing basis (Gray, 1989).

Not many would argue with the notion that the implementation of Workforce Investment Act has had its challenges. The WIA not only brings together nearly 50 workforce programs, but also has stipulations about how stakeholders should work together. According to the WIA, higher educational institutions, workforce providers, elected officials, the private sector, labor unions, and other stakeholders should work
together to make a great difference in the lives of people who are unemployed, underemployed, and those who live in poverty.

Achieving large-scale progress against high unemployment and addressing the complex labor issues of our time is a monumental task, one that has not been achieved by the WIA programs and its predecessors. The calls from stakeholders to create and enhance and sustain collaborations between community colleges and industry suggest disillusionment from legislators, the public, and other stakeholders regarding the ability of Congress to solve one of the most important society problems, unemployment. Both the ongoing challenges with workforce development in the nation and the calls for increased collaborative partnerships between community colleges and the private sector serve to underscore the role these two partners play in the nation’s colossal workforce system.

Community colleges have served communities for more than 100 years, providing countless services ranging from providing vocational training, to helping train employees in emergent industries, to providing workforce certifications, and entry to four-year institutions. In addition, community colleges provide open access, flexible schedules, and low tuition costs making it easier for individuals to attain an education. Similarly, businesses have the information educational institutions require, such as the skills needed for emerging industries, labor market demographics and industry trends. Furthermore, businesses are needed to fuel the prosperity of local and regional communities, the state, and the nation.

Little is known about the concerted efforts between community colleges and businesses leaders in the context of workforce development. Therefore, this study
contributes significantly to the literature on community college and business collaborative partnerships. To address today’s complex labor market needs, it is important to understand the ways in which leaders work and learn together to address the labor market issues in the Midwest workforce regional area.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

There is no single definition for research. However, it can be described as a systematic way of collecting information for the purpose of investigating something (Merriam, 2002; Creswell, 2012). Research methods can be positioned into two fundamental categories: quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative research attempts to answer a hypothesis, the focus is on numbers (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research is about describing a situation, pondering its meaning, and examining lived experiences over and over again to yield verstehen, or understanding (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011). In qualitative research, researchers pursue answers to questions that emphasize how social experiences are constructed and given meaning rather than making predictions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Another aspect of qualitative research is providing rich and thick descriptions, meaningful insights into the phenomenon and increased understanding from the perspectives of those involved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2002).

The rich and thick descriptions of the individuals’ lived experiences and the insights gained from them are especially relevant to this study because there has been a relatively insignificant number of qualitative studies that focused on the Workforce Investment Act and its connections to community colleges and related collaborative partnerships that take place within Workforce Investment Boards. To expand the knowledge base on how business and community college leaders create, define, make
meaning of, and sustain their collaborative initiatives, the qualitative or interpretive (interchangeably) approach is both well suited and necessary for this study.

Drawing from the qualitative research inquiry process of *verstehen* (understanding), which is based on unique methodological traditions that examine a societal or human problems (Merriam, 2009), this inquiry focuses specifically on the partnerships formed between business leaders—members of a local Workforce Investment Board (WIB)—and local community college leaders joining in their efforts to assess and address the educational and workforce training needs of a Midwestern state.

The primary question that guided this study: *How do business and community college leaders build and sustain partnerships towards effective implementation of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) initiatives in the Midwest?* Additional questions include:

1. What are the historical and legislative contexts in which the WIA’s local area (WIB) in the Midwest has developed regional and local collaborative partnerships?
2. What are the motivational factors for business and community college leaders to engage in collaborative partnerships?
3. What is the process of developing ideas and strategies for the implementation of workforce plans?
4. What are the WIB’s effective programs and initiatives resulting from their collaborative partnerships? This chapter elaborates on the theoretical underpinnings of this study, its research design, validation criteria, and the role of a researcher in qualitative inquiry.
Theoretical Positioning of the Study

Interpretive Inquiry

Interpretive inquiry has its roots in philosophical hermeneutics (among other traditions) that dates back to ancient Greek philosophy (Polkinghorne, 1983). The word hermeneutics lies in the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, mostly translated "to interpret." The term is associated with the name of Hermes, messenger god in Greek mythology. Hermes’ daily routine included delivering messages to diffuse knowledge and understanding between the gods and the mortals (Merriam, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1983).

Hermeneutics became prominent in the sixteenth century as the art of interpreting biblical texts. Philosophical Hermeneutics is associated primarily with the names of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and Has-George Gadamer (1900-2002). These thinkers moved hermeneutics from interpretation of biblical texts to illumination of the human sciences.

Friedrich Schleiermacher posits that the process of interpreting is analogous to the process of creating the document. The key to obtaining an accurate understanding of text is to re-experience and reconstruct the author’s experience in writing the original document. Wilhelm Dilthey embraced Schleiermacher’s Hermeneutics and developed it into a typology of human life. Dilthey proposed that rather than examining one’s own experience and using it as the foundation for knowing life-categories, “we should examine the expressions of life, literature and art, social life and the course of history—and used them as the objects for investigation in the human sciences” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 221). Martin Heidegger's philosophical concerns were with the meaning of Being. “It is not about the way we know the world, but the way we are (cited in

Interpretation is more than the construction of meaning; it also involves infiltrating possibilities—the exchanges between the interpreter and the meaning of text. Society is mediated by the interactions of humans through communication. Understanding how we view the world, how we communicate with one another is an important aspect of hermeneutic philosophy. The job of a qualitative researcher is one of the interpreter in that he or she attempts to reconstruct the participant’s ideas, as well as messages and the intentions carried in them, and to artfully integrate them a holistic description (Polkinghorne, 1983).

My intentions as a researcher and interpreter in this study were to examine the complex relationships and interactions of business and community college leaders and ways in which they ascribe meaning to their experiences. The reconstructions of ideas were captured through rich and thick description and analysis of the leaders’ ideas, perspectives, and understanding of their collaborative actions and practices.

**Pragmatism**

Founded by Charles S. Peirce (1830-1914) and William James (1842-1910), pragmatism is a philosophy that “encourages us to seek out the processes and to do the things that work best to help us achieve desirable ends” (Ozmon & Craver, 2008, p. 119).
Pragmatists assert the value of ideas in terms of their practical results and applications. As James would say, ideas have to have “cash-value.” John Dewey (1859—1952) carried the leading notions of pragmatism to develop his philosophy of education that championed a problem-solving method widely applied in education and other fields of inquiry and practice. Dewey’s version of pragmatism is known as experimentalism and instrumentalism. Embracing the centrality of experience and social action as major pragmatic constructs, Dewey believed that people should make use of ideas for practical purposes, to help them develop an approach to social problems by “testing ideas […] reflectively before acting on them,” and by a “critical appraisal and reflective assessment of results after trying out the ideas […] in practice” (Ozmon & Craver, 2008, p. 130).

In other words, pragmatism “emphasizes the synergy of relations between theory and practice, knowledge and action” (Polkinhorne, 1983, p. 120). This study is pragmatic in its intentions to (a) “test” the ideas that guide the business and community leaders’ actions on the value of these ideas’ usefulness, and to (b) reflectively evaluate these leaders’ collaborative decision-making processes and see whether they produce desirable ends. Collaborative processes in which business and community leaders are engaged illuminate pragmatist epistemology that validates ideas accepted by a community of inquirers after they put these ideas to test (Greenwood & Levin, 2005).

The United States has attempted to solve workforce problems through the WIA and other workforce systems, but little is known about collaborative efforts among mandated and non-mandated partners. In pragmatist terms, this study seeks to inquire into how leaders collaborate or engage: how they engage, communicate and generate
ideas for workforce initiatives and projects, how they act on their ideas, and how they reflect and evaluate their actions.

**Appreciative Inquiry**

Conceptually aligned with the pragmatic conception of knowledge, appreciative inquiry (AI) is an organizational development practice and approach that draws on social constructionist beliefs and its applications to management and organizational transformation (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros 2008). The main function of AI is that users focus on the strengths of the organization (positive aspects) rather than confront error via conventional problem solving. A key element underlying AI is that verbal cues create one’s reality. Therefore, expressive words such as dysfunctional, codependent, and stressed out affect individuals’ thinking and acting. According to Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2008), this deficit-based language has the potential of hindering future successes and limit growth. To overcome the negative vocabulary structure, AI offers an affirmative vocabulary of shaping the future (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). Cooperrider and Whitney (n.d.) offer the following explanation:

[... ] the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives “life” to a living system when is most alive, most effective and most constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms. (p. 319)

The above quote brings forward the understanding about AI’s purpose, which involves engaging individuals in a process of discovery. AI focuses on individuals getting to know each other to build connections across boundaries of power and authority. AI creates synergy through the art and practice of asking questions that
strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d.).

Today’s issues in society transcend organizational cultural, and sometimes national boundaries. For this reason, the exploration of collaborative partnerships that lead to effective partnerships is on the rise. Leaders continually search for ways to engage stakeholders to produce effective and positive change (McKergow & Clarke, 2002; Hammond, 1996). Groups and organizations are essential to shaping communities, improving education, and addressing economic and workforce development. Therefore, the well-being of society depends on how well these groups and organizations function. Thus, the importance of IA lies in the ability of organizations to cultivate, strengthen and maintain “collaborative partnerships where diverse voices, competing ideologies and opposing traditions can all be heard and respected” (McKergow & Clarke, 2002, p.26).

Appreciative inquiry informed this study in terms of discovering the positive capacity of Workforce Investment Board in a Midwestern state through carefully crafted appreciative questions that engaged the participants in sharing their experiences in a way that gave energy and vitality to their individual experiences with workforce development activities.

Social Constructionism

A fundamental theme of AI is that the appreciative process of knowing is socially constructed. That is, we construct learning through interactions with others and within social contexts. “The idea that a social system creates or determines its own reality is known as social constructionism” (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 13). Appreciative inquiry draws on this theory and places it in a positive context. Social constructivism emphasizes
social relationships and the impact of collaboration on thinking and learning (Gergen, 2009).

Social constructionism is yet another lens through which this study can be conceptualized. For constructionists, reality is not static, but rather actively constructed by individuals as they engage collectively in action. Critical reflexivity plays an important role in the constructionist perspective. It means for an individual to call into question his or her own premises “by letting go of what is obvious and by listening to other’s points of view” (Merriam, 2009, p. 8).

From this perspective, it was helpful to view the Midwestern Workforce Investment Board as a space of conversation where board members participated in the co-construction of meaning (Gergen, 2009). Each member of the WIB brought their own set of lived experiences and professional knowledge. The understanding and capacity of both educators and employers is constantly challenged. For example, the labor market has undergone sweeping changes since the Workforce Investment Act was enacted. Therefore, educational leaders become more dependent on the knowledge of employers to provide them with information about the labor market needs. Likewise, employers, especially those that do not have training facilities, are dependent on education to develop training for their employers. To illuminate how these leaders engaged, communicated and worked together, this study focused on learning from those who were directly influenced by the actions (and knowledge) of others to solve issues related to workforce.

Constructionists emphasize the discovery of deeper meaning. Therefore, it is important to understand how representatives of businesses involved in the Midwestern WIB understand their specific roles and how the board constructs a richer, more
comprehensive appreciation of workforce issues (Gray, 1989). Constructivism (aligned with constructionism conceptually) rests on the belief that deeper meaning is uncovered through working together toward a more worthwhile future. Engaging in meaningful dialogue leads human beings to a common ground (Gergen, 2009). Gray (1989) emphasizes that collaboration involves building a common ground of the problem from the respective points of view of each member of the group. Each helps to identify how their collective understanding is used for a course of action (Gray, 1989).

Positioned primarily within the interpretive and pragmatic paradigms of research, this study is informed specifically by the ideas, concepts, and assumptions of appreciate inquiry and social constructionism (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2008; McKergow & Clarke, 2002; Gergen, 2009). These perspectives illuminate the nature of collaborative relationships, the ideas that form them, and ways in which these ideas are being enacted, evaluated, and reflected upon.

**Research Design**

Qualitative research assumes that reality is socially constructed (Creswell, 2012). It is therefore essential to consider how the participants of this study construct the labor-market realities and move forward to developing effective collaborative workforce programs and initiatives for the benefit of Americans. To present a comprehensive picture of the WIB in a Midwestern state’s activities, a case study approach was employed in this study as the most effective way of investigation.

**Case Study**

A natural fit emerges in case study for an inquiry exploring the nature of collaborations and partnerships between business and community college leaders. A key
Element of using a case study approach is that it provides the researcher with the opportunity to explore the whole of the experience of the participants within the social context. Although, the context and situation of a particular case are important, they are not what the case is about. To provide an accurate interpretation of a case the researcher must have good understanding of the surroundings, its conditions, the context, and the situation. It is important to emphasize that in case studies, the content is foreground, and the context is background (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 255; Stake, 2010; VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007).

A case study approach was chosen as an in-depth investigation of a Midwestern WIB as a bounded system. A bounded system is a unit in which there are boundaries such as one particular group. “Bounded” is defined as a case that is separated out for research in terms of place, time, and other physical boundaries (Stake, 2010). The main purpose of a case study is to seek a holistic description and explanation without removing the phenomenon’s variables from its unique context (Merriam, 2009). In this case, the bounded system was a Workforce Investment Board in a Midwestern state.

Setting a WIB in a Midwestern state apart for research in relation of time and location, allows for an exploration based on the events and activities that take place within (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2011). Merriam (2009) postulates that “the case study is a process of investigating intricate social units involving numerous variables of potential significance in understanding a phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 59).

While previously conducted studies focused on documents from federal reports, the implementation of the WIA and One Stop Centers, this study sought to capture the perspectives of businesses and education representatives in a WIB in a Midwestern state.
The aim of this study was to learn how business and education leaders collaborated and partnered with one another to achieve the goals of the WIA. Specifically, this study explored how leaders of the WIB in a Midwestern state engaged, communicated and developed workforce development programs. This study illuminated the unique and complementary experiences and perspectives of both business and educational leaders who were charged with getting people ready for work.

**Research Site and Participants**

In qualitative research, the selection of participants is purposeful and researchers strive to determine the sites to conduct the study, the participants that will best answer the questions of the study, and the sources of information to use (Creswell, 2012; Hesse-Biber & Leavy).

There are a number of purposeful sampling strategies that are used to gather data depending on the research problem and questions (Creswell, 2012, p. 206; Merriam, 2009, p. 80). This study relied on what Creswell (2012) calls a “convenience” sampling. In a convenience sampling “the researcher selects participants because they are willing and available to be studied” (Creswell, 2012, p. 145.).

Twelve businesses and education leaders from a WIB in a Midwestern state participated in this study. The criteria for the selection of the Workforce Investment Board included one that exhibited:

- A range of organizational structures and service delivery practices
- A systematic approach to performance measurement
- Leadership patterns in setting up, implementing, and operating workforce development systems
• Leadership that encouraged employers to engage substantively in workforce development.

Upon obtaining approval for the research from Benedictine University, which is a step required for ethical and legislative reasons (Creswell, 2012), this researcher sought assistance from educational leaders to recommend a WIB. This researcher attained permission to conduct the study from the identified WIB and subsequently recruited the participants.

A few individuals, including two college presidents highly recommended the WIB in a Midwestern State. They WIB, they believed operated effectively and was perceived as one of the best WIBs in the area. The leaders’ recommendations were consistent with the up-to-date information I found on WIB’s website. Upon their advice, this researcher contacted the manager to express interest in pursuing research on the WIB, the manager sought approval from the Executive Committee. Subsequently, this researcher presented information about the purpose of the study at the following Board of Director’s meeting. The response from the WIB members was positive and encouraging. Successively, this researcher contacted members of the WIB to invite them to participate in the study. There was an overwhelming response from the members of the WIB and as a result, twelve participants were recruited to participate in the study.

**Sources of Data and Methods of their Collection**

Another aspect of qualitative research is that the researcher delves into specific meaning and applications of the inquiry by using interviews, observing participants in their environments, reviewing documents and even adding stories and dialogue analysis (Stake, 2010, loc. 2400-2401) to interpret the information. This is done to garner an
understanding of the individuals’ lived experiences. To illuminate the meaning of these experiences, multiple sources of data were considered for this inquiry, such as in-depth semi-structured interviews, legislative documents and reports, all-encompassing observational and reflective notes taken throughout the study, and observations at WIB board and committee meetings.

**Interviews**

Qualitative accounts of how things work depend greatly on personal experience. Personal interviews are applied in a number of situations such as obtaining unique information held only by the person being interviewed, collecting a numerical aggregation of information from many individuals, or asking questions about something that a researcher cannot obtain otherwise (Stake, 2010).

The evidence for the researcher’s assertions about how things work often includes much description of personal experience. The evidence should be affirmed by repetition and challenge, much of it experiential. Qualitative research is a discipline working through to experiential understanding; small amounts aggregating to larger insights. (Stake, 2010 loc. 1838-1843)

Because the use of interviews is commonplace for qualitative case study research, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were employed in this study. In-depth interviews use individuals as “the point of departure for the research process” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 94). Semi-structured interviews typically “rely on a set of questions and try to guide the conversation to remain, more loosely, on those questions” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 102). The Interview Guide (Appendix B) was created to guide the
interview process. The interview guide questions were informed by relevant academic sources and theoretical assumptions of this study.

Key to effective in-depth interviews is active asking and listening. In in-depth interviews, a researcher must not only ask active questions, but also consciously listen to the facts and statements shared by the interviewee. This active listening is defined as a meaning-making endeavor that takes place between the researcher and the interviewee (Creswell, 2012, p. 94). Typically, in-depth interviews yield large amounts of data in the form of interview transcripts. The researchers’ charge is to identify patterns that emerge from the rich descriptions of the interviewee’s life-world. Naturally, guiding research questions are generally open-ended, permitting an array of findings to emerge (Creswell, 2012; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Fontana & Frey; 2005).

All interviews conducted for this study were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and provided for the participants’ verification of accuracy. Each interview lasted for approximately forty-five minutes to an hour. To protect the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the information provided by them, each participant was assigned a pseudonym and the interview tapes, along with their transcriptions, were kept in a locked cabinet and under a secured password.

**Observational and Reflective Notes**

Stake (2010) conjectures that experiencing an event, observing a person, listening to a person attentively, or glancing through records, is one of the most valuables tools for qualitative research (Stake, 2010). Thus, “qualitative research is endlessly creative and interpretive” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Observation, a key element in qualitative research, which provides meaning and greater *verstehen* to the words of the interviewee
In addition to the interviewing data, comprehensive observational and reflective or field notes were documented throughout the study. Field notes (of events, activities and people) are the researcher’ daily accounts of her experience in the field. Sometimes, these notes are written down as they appear on the researcher’s mind. Field notes were used during this inquiry to reflect on insights, hunches or emerging themes that surfaced in the setting (Creswell, 2012; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

The data that emerged from this inquiry were protected adhering to codes of ethics. A written consent was obtained from the participants and they were informed about the nature of this study fully and in detail (Appendix A). There were safeguards to protect participant’s identities and the research locations. All personal data were concealed and would be made public behind the shield of anonymity. Lastly, every effort was made to ensure data were accurate (Christians, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Documents and Artifacts

Documents such as public and private records are valuable sources of information in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). For the purposes of this study, the following documents were collected: meeting agendas, meeting minutes, members’ attendance records, strategic planning documents, program information, and data reports. Most of these documents are public records and accessible on the website. In addition, other relevant materials were collected during meetings. Thus, the collection of these documents provided this inquiry with a rich source of information (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2011).
Data Analysis and Interpretation Strategies

Creswell (2012) explains the process of analyzing and interpreting data that result from the inquiry as “drawing conclusions about it; representing it in tables, figures, and pictures to summarize it; and explaining the conclusions in words to provide answer to the research questions” (Creswell, 2012, p. 10). The process of data analysis in this study consisted of several stages. Guided primarily by Saldana’s (2009) manual for data analysis, the process began with open coding of the interviews. Following the transcription of the interviews, each transcript was read, re-read and reviewed several times to gain further “versaten” or understanding of the answers given by each participant. Reading the participants’ answers to each question helped in increased understanding of the essence of their responses. Also, it provided a glimpse of the patterns that began to take shape. To prepare for the first cycle of the coding process, the answers to the questions were compiled and merged into one document. According to Saldana (2009), the process of grouping data is useful when the researcher is searching for patterns in coded data that share some characteristic. Therefore, each question contains twelve responses, the number of participants of the study. There were a total of 20 documents corresponding to the number of the interview questions compiled as a result of initial coding.

The first cycle of coding consisted of condensing the responses into single statements from each participant. The phrases derived provided another glimpse of the patterns forming from the participant’s collective responses. The second cycle of coding entailed searching for repetitive statements to categorize them. The identified patterns in the coded data were categorized. Therefore, each one of the phrases was grouped by
category. The first and second cycle of coding is illustrated in Appendix D. The initial themes surfaced and they were interpreted in the context of the overarching questions. In the third cycle, the data extracted from each question were compared against the words most commonly used by the participants. For instance, all participants mentioned the manager’s name repeatedly. Her name was mentioned a total of 86 times. Each search resulted in a large number of times a specific word was used. Again, these words were analyzed in the context of the study’s overarching questions and sub-questions as demonstrated in Appendix E. The most commonly used words throughout the interviews were: At the table, benefit, communication, community, college, connect, economic, education, effective, engage, funding, initiatives, develop, the return on the investment, success, together, value.

**Coding Tools**

The recordings from each one of the interviews were transcribed using a voice recognition program, Dragon Dictate. In addition, Microsoft Word tools such as highlight, italics and the bold functions were used to distinguish specific statements. Additionally, a table was created to organize themes using the sort function to easily identify common phrases. To capture the most commonly used words, the search function of Word was utilized to look up words, then a “snap shot” or “print screen” were activated to capture the frequency a specific word appeared in a document. This process is illustrated in APPENDIX F.

Each word and the sentence or context in which it was used was extracted from each one of the participants’ transcriptions to decipher its core meaning. Each one of these statements was analyzed for consistency against the themes that emerged from the
transcripts. To prioritize the emergent themes from the searched words, related words were grouped into the category that best described a specific theme. For example the phrases/words: Being at the table, communication, connect, engaging, listen, participating, perspectives, and together are all words that might describe or might be used when referring to “collaboration,” an emergent theme. The themes that emerged from each one of the responses were grouped and analyzed one more time as demonstrated in Appendix G. The final stage of data analysis consisted of analyzing and comparing the documents against the statements made by the participants. For example, the WIB members’ attendance log for the last two years was compared to the information participants provided. For instance, Rita stated that she takes pride in the fact that she tries to be at every WIB meeting. When reviewing the attendance log, Rita’s statement accurately reflected the information found in the log.

Therefore, the emergent themes, those that make a meaningful contribution to understanding how the WIB builds and sustains partnerships towards effective implementation of the WIA initiatives were determined by the statements most commonly used, the number of times a certain word was used, and the WIB documents. Figure 1 illustrates the process of coding.
Validation Criteria

Research experts assert that interpretations in research are not always perfect. To minimize the flaws in observations and assertions, and to increase confidence in accurate interpretations, the researcher should triangulate data to increase confidence that the information is interpreted accurately (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 2010). The principle of triangulation in research “pertains to the goal of seeking at least three ways of verifying or corroborating a particular event, description, or fact being reported by a study.” Such corroboration serves as “another way of strengthening the validity of a study” (Yin, 2011,
Triangulation as emphasized by Creswell, is the process of supporting evidence from various participants, documents, and observations and diverse types of data collection (Creswell, 2012).

Therefore, the accuracy of this study was enhanced through the examination of data from the interviews, federal and state legislative documents and WIB reports, meeting agenda and minutes, and observations from meetings to corroborate the themes that emerged from the research. To ensure accuracy, the transcribed documents were shared with participants for their review (Appendix C). As emphasized by research experts, verifying and analyzing multiple sources of data and member “checks,” are vital strategies in qualitative research. In the same vein, a researcher must be thoughtful and critically aware of her personal biases, dispositions and assumptions and should disclose them to add to the integrity of her inquiry (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009).

The trustworthiness criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) remain most widely used in qualitative research. These criteria refer to establishing the verisimilitude of the research findings, determining the extent to which results of a research are applicable to other contexts and other individuals, and showing that results are an accurate representation of what occurred (cited in Hendricks, 2009, p. 112).

**Researcher’s Self**

An exposure of a researcher’s self and keeping a daily journal of self-reflective notes are additional safeguards for the credibility of qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). Throughout the study, comprehensive self-reflective notes were documented and negotiated for potential biases.
I explored a topic that has a personal meaning, but also one where I could have been a beneficiary of the insights gained from it. I grew up with little to no chances of achieving an education. I was lucky, though. The opportunities for employment that existed when I was required to work and my desire to beat the odds helped me to overcome the barriers that stood in the way of my aspirations. My life trajectory has served to illuminate my understanding of the barriers faced by those individuals whose lack of education and opportunities prevent them from attaining employment. Furthermore, I have used these insights and perspectives to help a community of Latinos and other diverse groups whose characteristics prevent them from accessing opportunities available to them.

Escaping a life of uncertainty, my parents brought my eight siblings and me to this country in search for a better life. I arrived at the United States at a time when manufacturing and other companies had enough jobs to hire an entire town of unskilled workers of all ages. At sixteen years of age, I did not speak the English language, and my parents needed my financial support. Under these circumstances, I was unable to escape the life of a factory worker. Intergenerational obligations are not uncommon among immigrants. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Latino young adults ages 16-25 who cut their education short during or right after high school say they did so because they had to assist their families financially (Lopez, 2009). Like the nearly nine in ten (89%) young people who say education is important in life (Lopez, 2009), I aspired an education. Yet, college was not an option for me. The insecurity my parents felt diminished with the opportunities for employment in this country. Despite our low levels of education and our inability to speak the English language, we were employable.
Fast-forward three decades later, my life is different. Something extraordinary happened along the way. I attained a formal education and began my professional career in a hospital setting where I witnessed the barriers non-English speakers faced accessing health care and social services. Many of these barriers were caused by the lack of knowledge about the resources available to them and the lack of a formal education.

In 1999, I founded Compañeros en Salud/Partners in Health, NFP, a coalition that assists individuals in accessing health and social services. Almost fifteen years later, we continue working together to provide Latino and other diverse groups the information they need to access bilingually and culturally health and social services. Galvanizing the members of Compañeros en Salud/Partners in Health, NFP into action, working with them to create programs, hosting events, and working on other initiatives has been both an educational and rewarding experience.

Undoubtedly, I received my firsts lessons about education (or lack of) and collaboration from my parents. I learned that working on the assembly line was hard work. One I would not escape unless I attained an education. As a family we worked together to ensure we all had food, shelter and clothing. We were a unit with a shared goal, survival. We worked hard to achieve it and we did. Likewise, Compañeros en Salud/Partners in Health, NFP, is comprised of representatives from social and health service agencies who come together to help others. I am the founder of the coalition, but I cannot take credit for its accomplishments. These accomplishments are due to the collective efforts of the group. Therefore, my interest in collaborations stems from my personal journey and my work with Compañeros en Salud/Partners in Health, NFP. I have learned that creating meaningful personal and professional relationships are
important to creating spaces where people find each other to openly share ideas, commitment and learning to find solutions to real problems. This inquiry allowed me to further explore the questions that are near and dear to my heart. Embarking on this journey was both an extraordinary opportunity and one of the most meaningful endeavors in my life.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the findings from the participants’ interviews as they related to the research questions presented for this study. The chapter consists of three sections. First, the chapter focuses on the profile of the Workforce Investment Board with its purpose, responsibility, and priorities and its organizational structure, followed by the profiles of the participants who shared their lived experiences as members of the WIB. The main part of this chapter represents the interpretation and analysis of the data obtained from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the participants, WIB documents, and observations at the WIB and committee meetings.

During the in-depth, semi-structured interviews study participants described their personal perspectives, the primary reasons why they joined the WIB, the core elements that guided their work, and the motivation that sustained their involvement in the Workforce Investment Board.

Triangulating multiple sources of data and keeping observational and reflective notes throughout the research process allowed me to create a holistic representation of the participants’ experiences within the Workforce Investment Board.

Consistent with the Appreciative Inquiry (AI), this study attempted to discover effective practices that made the local Workforce Investment Board successful, the board’s greatest assets, and how these forces were used for workforce development.
Every organization has something that works right—things that give it life when it is most alive, effective, successful and connected in healthy ways to its stakeholders and communities. “AI begins by identifying what is positive and connecting it in ways that heighten energy, vision, and action for change,” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. xv).

**Local Workforce Investment Board in a Midwestern State: Structure and Governance**

The Workforce Investment Board is one of twenty-three local investment areas located in a Midwestern state. The leader of the County is the designated Chief Local Elected Official (CEO). The Chief Elected Official partners with the Workforce Investment Board on planning and budgeting for the WIA programs. The Chief Elected Official appoints the members to the WIB.

The Workforce Investment Board is comprised of 33 mandated and non-mandated public and business sector members. The members of the WIB were leaders with a vast range of professional experiences including industry, human resources management, education, and economic development. In addition the members were comprised of diversity of gender, age, and ethnicity. The WIB employed three staff members at the time the study took place: a manager, an administrative specialist and a business liaison. The state receives funding under the Federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the nation’s main law directing public resources into employment services and workforce training programs. The state allocates funding to the local WIBs based on a federal allocation formula. Beginning, July 1, 2015, the funding will be funneled through the
new law, WIOA. Therefore, the federal workforce system provides direction as well as guidance for the delivery of workforce programs.

The WIB’s purpose, responsibility and priorities are illustrated in Figure 2.

Purpose, Responsibilities, and Priorities

Figure 2. Workforce Investment Board: Purpose, responsibility, and priorities.

The operation of the Workforce Investment Board is very similar to a nonprofit board of directors in that the members have fiduciary responsibility as well as broad policy leadership for the planning, operations, and infrastructure of workforce programs. The WIB has three committees that guide their work.

The Executive Committee is responsible for providing effective leadership. Its responsibilities included oversight of the strategic agenda, committees, materials, meetings, member recruitment and orientation, and the WIB’s continuing education. The System and Trends Committee provided policy recommendations policy regarding the design, development, and implementation of a uniform workforce system to respond to
economic development needs. In addition, the committee was charged with enhancing and managing the performance measurements for the WIB. The Youth Council was responsible for recommending policy direction to the WIB regarding the design, development, and implementation of programs to benefit youth participants. The Council was also responsible for the coordination of youth services and recommendation of youth service providers.

According to the participants’ accounts, each one of these committees worked in alignment with the WIB’s strategic plan. Some of the participants outlined how the goals of each committee were reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the overall goals were met. The WIB’s structure illustrated in Figure 3.
Figure 3. Workforce Investment Board structure.

Local WIB: The Participants’ Profiles

Twelve business and education leaders participated in the study. In the WIB of a Midwestern state, there was only one community college, located in WIB’s service area. Therefore, only one of the participants represented a community college. However, two other participants represented education. Thus, the participants represented, K-12, two-year and four-year educational institutions. Most of the participants of the study filled
influential positions in the County. The participants demonstrated depth of knowledge and experience in workforce and economic development issues. The participants’ leadership and collective years of experience were evident by their ability to see the “big picture” and think laterally to address workforce and economic issues of the County. The participants represented the following industries: manufacturing banking, health, education, logistics management, union trade, economic and government sectors as illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Industry sectors represented.

The WIB is comprised of individuals from a culturally diverse background and gender mix. The gender mix of the WIB was consistent with the number of males and females who participated in the study as demonstrated in Figure 5.
Figure 5. Gender diversity.

The ethnic diversity of the participants consisted of two African Americans, one Hispanic, and nine Caucasian as demonstrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Ethnic diversity.

The wealth and depth of experience of the participants were represented in the influential positions they held, which ranged from presidents to vice-presidents, to managers to superintendent and elected officials. Figure 7 demonstrates the range of positions occupied by the participants.
In addition to the cultural and professional diversity, more than half of the twelve participants had “cross-over” membership in related associations and the County’s economic development organization. Also, three of the participants represented the top five largest companies in the county (1500-2065 employees).

**Towards Effective Implementation of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Initiatives: Analysis of the Findings**

As stated earlier, the research findings presented in this chapter are based on analysis of the following data sources: in depth, semi-structured interviews, WIB documents, and my observations at two different WIB’s meetings and a Youth Council meeting over a two-month period (May-July 2014). During in-depth, semi-structured interviews, study participants shared and described their perceptions and experiences from serving on the WIB. Throughout the interviews, the participants talked openly about their lived experiences serving on the WIB.
Resulting from the analysis of the interviews and supporting sources of data are the following main themes: (1) motivation: reasons for joining the WIB; (2) collaboration: within and across boundaries; and (3) leadership: consistent source of support and stability. While the three themes are described as distinct, there is significant overlap among them. Further, the participants’ reactions to the interview questions frequently addressed more than one theme. Subsequently, the information in this chapter is described in the theme that appears to fit most logically. The emergent themes from the data analysis are illustrated in Figure 8.

Emergent Themes

Figure 8. Emergent themes.
Motivation: Reasons for Joining the WIB

The Workforce Investment Act regulates the composition of the WIBs. For example, the mandated partners are workforce providers that receive funding from the government and are part of the One Stop Centers. Eleven of the twelve participants of the study were non-mandated members, or volunteers. The community college participant was the only mandated slot required under the WIA. Thus, the collaborative partnerships established were in the context of the federal workforce system. In general, the participants’ knowledge about the Workforce Investment Act ranged from understanding the overall purpose to specific details such as the requirements for WIB composition (51% of the slots are reserved for businesses).

The participants of the study were influential leaders from local companies, educational institutions, associations and government agencies. Therefore, each one of the participants had their own set of life and professional experiences. Some of them had lived in the County all their lives while others moved to the County for professional reasons.

While each participant shared a unique set of motivations for joining the WIB, the recruitment process varied for each one. For some, it was a purely self-interest that led them to personally seek a seat on the WIB. Others stated that an existing WIB member or community leader had recruited them. In other cases, the WIB manager and/or the CEO had invited them to join.

Regardless of how the participants became members of the WIB, they were joined by a common extrinsic motivation: their desire to eliminate the barriers that stand in the way of having a healthy economy, such unemployment and skills gaps. In their view,
having a skilled workforce was important for economic growth. Further, most of them stated that the key element to economic growth was providing individuals with quality education and opportunities for training. The participants’ collective vision for the County was to: (a) have high quality and affordable education from preschool to higher education (b) have job growth and business expansion (c) provide employers with educated and well-trained people (d) people have a job in areas that are skills appropriate (e) make sure people who wanted to work were not underemployed.

As influential members of the community and representatives of a company, they joined the WIB to bring the voice of a specific segment of the community or industry, to share their professional knowledge, skills and experience to benefit the community and to benefit their company. Three motivational conditions led them to engage and collaborate with the WIB: (a) strengthening education, workforce and economic growth; (b) supporting workforce through active involvement; and (c) leveraging resources: a business driven decision. The primary reasons the participants elected to join the WIB are illustrated in Figure 9 in order or priority.
Figure 9. Motivation for joining the WIB.

**Strengthening education, workforce, and economic growth.** Central to the participants’ motivation for serving on the Board were; the need to create jobs, to provide individuals with the skills they need to compete in the labor market, and ultimately, to strengthen the economic vitality of the County. With regard to education and training, participants felt they need to sit at the table to ensure individuals were given the opportunities to attain the skills needed for the labor market. Also, the participants emphasized the need for economic empowerment through providing employers with highly skilled workers. The participants’ narratives illuminate their personal perspectives about the intersections between education and the economy.

For example, Drew talked about the Great Recession and how it impacted the community. He also shared his understanding of how providing individuals with the
skills they need is connected to the overall economy. He stated that he was driven to join the WIB because he believed that the County needed to develop high-quality workforce programs for unemployed and unskilled workers. In his words:

I was interested in joining the WIB because I believe that business and education leaders should be working together to prepare people coming out of school for careers. Since the fall of 2007, the construction industry has been impacted. There has been a decline in the industry. It was a year before the stock market crashed. We have, in my particular trade, 40% of our man-hours are for the construction of single-family homes. That was directly tied towards houses. We worked on strip malls, fire stations, and schools—because of those housing projects; all those other things were impacted. Hundreds of people lost their careers, their homes, and their families. I'm very interested in anything related to jobs and preparing, training and retraining people for careers. (Drew)

Irene also expressed the work of the WIB and the reasons for her involvement:

One of the principles that I really appreciate about the Workforce Investment Board is being a resource for people who are disenfranchised, who may be are out of work, and who need that retraining to be a viable support for their families. (Irene)

Cesar’s motivation to join the WIB:

I live in the County. I see what goes on around me. There are a lot of great things, but I also see a lot of homeless people. You see a lot of homes on the market. You see a lot of foreclosed homes. You see all that then you say to yourself... I know there are jobs out there and it doesn't have to be like that. Yes... you want to understand what you can do. Here in the County. You would like to take care of the state, but you want to start here. What can we do to make those things not be there? [At the WIB], we are doing that and we are helping people get their GEDs. People are actually getting jobs and putting dollars in their pockets to be able to support and sustain their families. (Cesar)

He also emphasized that being on the WIB provides him the opportunity to help bridge the gap that exists between the skills and available jobs.
Cesar further explained:

I can say that I have plenty of jobs available in different types of areas. I would love to marry that up with the needs that the local Workforce Investment Board has. I can’t promise and commit that every single person is going to get a job, but there are openings. I am sure that there are other companies out there that are in the same position. They have a need for employees and it is difficult for whatever reason to connect the two. (Cesar)

For Brook it was about putting the WIA into action. He stated two specific reasons for his involvement. First, he wanted to better understand the labor needs of the County. Second, he wanted to be part of the workforce solution through the resources provided by the government. He understood his role as a member of the WIB:

Continuing to support [the WIB] and understanding what some of the needs are in the County. Putting our dollars for youth preparedness for career scholarships. Also, taking what's determined at the federal and the state level and making it work at the local level. It’s about understanding what our top occupations are and making decisions around that. (Brook)

The skills gap in the County was a concern to many of the participants and one of the reasons they cited for joining the WIB. For example, Ashley believed that not everyone understands the trends that are shaping the manufacturing world. In her view, the new manufacturing requires individuals with hard and soft skills. It also requires educators to understand the need to provide students with practical experiences. She described the reasons for her involvement this way:

We are really trying to get the community and the schools aware of the opportunities available in manufacturing. We have really good jobs. We have scientists. We have chemists. We are a business. We have people doing quality control and quality assurance. We are hiring people. We pay them good salaries and give them good career paths. The manufacturing paradigm has to change. There are really good positions available here and we offer them good pay. We are very interested in trying to attract young chemists, specialists, R&D or research and development workers. We have to help our kids know basic things like problem solving, critical thinking, and how to be resourceful and how to prioritize.
Those things, I think, are part of the process. You can have good technical skills, but if you do not have good social skills or know when to ask for help, you may not succeed. They [students] don't know what a quality technician is. They don't know what it means to be a scientist or a chemist. It’s a label for them. We have to do our part in helping teachers understand what those are so that they can make it real for the students. This is in addition to getting the students in internships. (Ashley)

Howard’s motivation to join was his desire to have a coordinated and calculated strategy for workforce development. In his view, a regional collaborative was needed to successfully address the economic issues of the County. He valued his involvement and contributions as an economic development leader. He summed it up this way:

All economic development leadership needs to have a leadership role on the Workforce Investment Board. The motivation [to join] is to have a successful economic development process. I am part of the workforce development solution. We not only need available workforce, but also a skilled workforce if we are going to be competitive. The programs run through the Workforce Investment Board and the participating service organizations are part and parcel to a successful economic development. (Howard)

Kennedy believed that community involvement should be integrated with the overall mission and goals of education. In Kennedy’s view, knowing the environment and the resources that were available was vital to the success of students. Thus, she strongly believed that her involvement was important for her students and the community. She shared:

As an educator, absolutely, it is part of my job to be involved in the community and the business world and to be making those connections. We are a school district where 70% of the families are struggling [economically]. They need all the help and the resources that they can get. Being a part of that and educating allows me to educate everybody within our organization and connect them to the resources. I want to provide hope for our families I know that things are hard. I know that sometimes they’re working three jobs and can’t even get above that poverty range. Yet, you know there is assistance. You can help out. We can help them have a brighter future for our kids. (Kennedy)
Eileen echoed some of Kennedy’s views. From her perspective, having the president of the college as a member of the WIB speaks volumes about the college’s commitment to workforce development. She explained:

The motivation to be there is that it is part of my job to be a member of the WIB. This is really important because the college provides much of the WIBs workforce training. The membership means that it puts community colleges at the table with businesses and people who are concerned about the economic prosperity of our community (…). Community colleges are about rising people’s education levels and improving their lives through education. The WIB is about providing employers with an educated workforce. It seems like this is a perfect match. (Debra)

The changing requirements of the current and future employees have changed and some individuals lack the basic skills they need to secure employment according to Linda. Her primary interest in being involved with the WIB was to share her knowledge as human resources professional to help individuals increase their opportunities for employment:

My motivation was in knowing that I can add some value to the organization. I think there is something that is still lacking in the communities. Something that would help match up good prospects, good candidates with good employers and have a good job match. There are still a lot of things in the interview process, in the application process that candidates just don't realize. (…) I often think, “If they had just not worn that particular outfit, if they had not said negative things about their prior employer, if they had been able to put a better package together presenting themselves.” These are mistakes people make in the process of interviewing that are preventing them from securing a job. My membership basically means that I am going a little bit beyond just being an employer, but actually doing something that can make a difference in the community for people that are just starting out. Getting people employed, those who are at the harder end of things, those who do not have the education, I might add value sharing what employers are really looking for in employees. (Linda)

Cesar summed up the overall belief from the participants about the intersection between workforce development and the economy: In his words:
It comes down to economics 101. Whether is the macroeconomics or microeconomics, you have people working; you have people spending dollars; you have people buying products; you have companies; you have inventors, you have to provide that. If that whole environment is sustained, you have people working and earning dollars, spending dollars. You have people putting it into in the companies and people who produce those products and businesses just keep going because the same people are working for those companies. (Cesar)

The participants’ narratives illustrated their personal motivations that led them to join the WIB. Their common thread joining them was the need to impart individuals with the knowledge and relevant skills with job-market value, those skills that are in high demand by employers. Their collective perspective: having a skilled workforce would spur the economic growth of the County. However, being at “the table” necessitated active involvement and their personal contributions.

**Supporting workforce through active involvement.** Through their active involvement, the participants believed they could share their concerns, their opinions, and their knowledge and expertise. They also articulated their desire to affect workforce policy by providing informed guidance through their life and professional experience. For some members, it was also important to represent those individuals who might not have a voice such as minorities. Equally important, human resources professionals expressed interest in helping individuals through interviewing techniques; employers also saw the value of promoting the types of jobs available and the skills needed for those positions. Correspondingly, the economic development organization executive shared his perspective on collaboration. He believed that the WIB and the economic development organization working together was the only way to address the workforce and economic issues of the County. Comparatively, participants representing educational institutions expressed their concern for those companies that lack resources for recruiting and
training incumbent employees. Hence, their interest was in bringing awareness about employer training. Additionally, one participant who is also a pastor at a local church affirmed that his involvement on the WIB gave him the opportunity to learn about the services available to the community. One of his main goals as a pastor, he indicated, was to promote the WIB services to his parishioners. Likewise, the school superintendent said that the majority of the families from her district are from low-income households. Thus, her interest was in learning about the information available in the community to share with other superintendents and staff. The more the staff knew about the services provided by the WIB, the better they could help the families, she said.

Therefore, the consensus of the participants’ was that their active involvement provided them with an opportunity to influence the workforce outcomes of the County. The narratives of the participants further illuminate the value they placed on their participation and the satisfaction they got from being involved.

Frank, for example, shared his desire to bring the voice of the African American community to the WIB:

I have been in the area for the majority of my life. It means that I am given a voice to raise concerns that may be overlooked or not included in the discussion. By being present at the meetings and in the room, you get to hear about things and the decisions that are being made that affect minority hiring, minority employment and training dollars being set aside. My specific interest is to make sure that the communities that are affected [by unemployment] and impacted receive equal benefit from the WIB. (Frank)

For Gray, it meant having a voice and being a part of the process. He said:

I have a voice. We are able to vote on grants and on a lot of other issues. I have a voice. In my opinion, it pays to have a role and being a part of it. (...) I help in some small way (Gray).
Cesar summed up the contributions he and other members make through their active involvement:

You have to know what's going on, where we have been, and where we need to go. We have to know what the Workforce Investment Board can do to facilitate that movement. I try to participate from my point of view as a human resources manager. My company represents a certain portion of the state and the County. Obviously that is what the Workforce Investment Board represents to me. That is my role to put my two cents in. When folks have issues that are brought up at these meetings, I want to have my input as well. [Our] best contributions are letting people know what is actually happening today. [For example], one of our members represents the local union for the contractors. When he speaks, he is always telling us what is going on. He tells us about people and how they have been out of a job for this long, but they have been doing this. It is interesting to hear what he has to say. You also hear from other individuals who represent other companies. The accountant on the Board usually tells us the trends they have going on and you hear from their perspective. I also tell them what is going on in my company. When you put all that together, the Board and especially employees of the Board, start to get a good picture of what's really going on. They also hear about the need to do certain things or how to change their activities and what strategies need to be looked at or and looked at differently. (Cesar)

Kennedy shared her cross-over involvement with another related agency and how her involvement impacts those around her. In her words:

I'm on the manufacturing association and the education to employment system board. These things all come together. I am a catalyst. I help by sharing between those entities all of what is going on. I share about the upcoming changes, about the things that can we do, where we can partner and how we can work together. I'm also a liaison to the educational world. I can inform not only my colleagues here within the district but also my colleagues outside the district. This district is very unique; it's a high school district. We have over nine other school districts that feed into us. I meet with the other superintendents regularly. I am on the Youth Council Committee. I'm relatively a new to the co-chair role. I'm learning. What's really interesting to me, and what I really enjoy is the data collection and the fact that the WIB is accountable. (Kennedy)

Irene’s active involvement is summarized:

I have been asked to go to some of the retention visits as a Workforce Investment Board member, but also as a person who works in the educational field. We go out to local business and ask them to share about their training, their education
needs and their workforce challenges. That information is then taken into consideration when policies and programs are being developed. That’s one way. Right now, I am also on a committee that is comprised of community colleges and four-year institutions in the area. We are putting together a resource guide of the workforce education that is available in the County. Once we have the database, employers will be able to look at the database to determine where they might send their employees for training. The other one is to identify training gaps. There may be gaps where there are no training programs available. The WIB also conducts research on what some of the needs are from a workforce development perspective. So, there has been quite a bit of research done by the Board to determine where the training gaps are in the county. We are also very active in sending letters or calling our local, state and federal representatives to communicate with them our concern when particular votes come up. (Irene)

Through their active involvement, the participants shared their concerns, their opinions, and their knowledge and expertise. Through their collective efforts, the participants said, they had a better chance of affecting workforce solutions. However, their involvement went beyond their personal interest in the mission of the WIB, some also acknowledged the benefits their companies gained through their involvement.

**Leveraging resources: A business-driven decision.** Some participants stated that they viewed their involvement on the WIB as an opportunity to strengthen their businesses while contributing to workforce issues. In some cases they stated that they saw their involvement as a benefit to their business strategy. For example, Brook explained why he decided to join the WIB:

This was both for the WIB and for the hospital. We need to understand what was occurring within the WIB and how we could benefit as an organization. It's really a business driven decision toward trying to make improvements and prepare the community for opportunities. The motivation was a win-win for both the WIB and the hospital. It means being a good partner. We have tremendous leadership within the WIB. There is business administrative support around that. It means trying to be a voice at the table for our entire community. My interest is around healthcare making sure that that's serviced well within the WIB. (Brook)
From the manufacturing perspective, Ashley stated, “I felt that it would be very helpful for our company to be involved. It would give us a ton of resources and a little visibility. It would benefit our company.” Linda shared similar reasons for serving on the WIB: “The president and I also felt that it would add an opportunity for the company to be visible in the community.”

Furthermore, some participants referred to their involvement as not only a long time commitment from their company, but also an expectation from the top leadership to have an influence in the communities they worked. In Cesar’s words:

The person that I report to is on the State Workforce Investment Board. So you know when there are counterparts in another facilities that are on the Workforce Investment Board, even our president, representing [our company]. It’s important for companies. Every board member is there for a reason. They are there to represent their companies as well as their own personal interests. So you may say what influence do they have? When certain items come up that can potentially impact a company, our company, my company, you speak up. That is being done at all levels: state, at the County and other counties. I think there is great influence. We gain a lot. We all understand what the end result is. You know that you are getting people in local areas employed. That’s the bottom line. We want people to work for [our company]. We want people to work for [the top employer at the County] or whatever company we represent. There's great influence at all levels. (Cesar)

As an approved trainer provider, Irene shared that it is helpful to be connected to the WIB: “[The university] has different educational programs that are listed on the State’ approved list. I have the opportunity to submit those programs for approval.”

The participants expressed their interest and commitment to participate on the WIB. Their leadership and influence as leaders in the community allowed them to have a comprehensive approach to improving workforce development in the county, which they believed was central to economic growth. Furthermore, through a culture of teamwork
and casual camaraderie, the participants joined the WIB to learn, to contribute through personal and professional knowledge, and to help others.

**Collaboration: Within and Across Boundaries**

In general the participants praised the WIB for its ability to draw the heads of influential private and public organizations, large and small employers, County government officials, school district representatives, the president of one community college, and representatives from universities and related non-profit agencies to “the table.”

As leaders of the community, the participants recognized the need to partner with one another and with other organizations to improve the skills of workers, to enhance their services and ultimately to better serve their communities. Although the collaborations that took place among the WIB members varied, the collaborative efforts inside and outside the WIB struck a common chord. The participants stated that the collaborative partnerships formed by the WIB provide opportunities for unemployed individuals, enhance and develop the skills of incumbent workers, enhance their programs, and serve to attract new businesses to the County.

The participants stated that one of the advantages of the collaborative networks that were formed was their extended capacity to learn from each other and to enhance their programs. In their opinion, no one entity alone could address and deliver workforce solutions.

Therefore, the collaborations that took place inside and outside the WIB affirmed the positive role the WIB has had in the County. The participants perceived the WIB as not only being effective, but also being an “active player” in the local community. For
example, Howard emphasized that the economic development imperative drove him to collaborate with the WIB. Similarly, some participants underscored the collaboration between the WIB and the economic development organization as one of the things that work very well in their County. The participants’ narratives demonstrate how their collaborative efforts have resulted in two effective strategies: their ability to draw leaders to a common table and their capacity to foster and engage their involvement as illustrated in Figure 10.

Collaboration: Within and Across Boundaries

![Collaboration: Within and Across Boundaries](image)

*Figure 10. Collaboration: Within and across boundaries.*

**Drawing leaders to a common table.** Although a few of the participants stated that their participation was a business driven decision, they all shared the common thread
of wanting to come to the table and create real benefits for the County. According to
their personal accounts on what works, most of them stated that it was the composition of
the WIB, the diverse thought and perspective of the members.

The participants stressed how the diversity of the WIB membership was
paramount to their success. For example, Howard explained how having a diverse group
of people was not only important, but also critical to achieving workforce development
goals. However, he also said that the diversity was only one part of the recipe for their
success. In his belief, there was one more essential ingredient, passion. In Howard’s
words:

The first best practice is inviting them to participate. We want to engage
employers that are not just showing up because they are filling a slot that is
mandated. We want people with passion. It’s not just about having the leaders.
It's about having people that have passion about the mission of the organization.
On Workforce Investment Boards, oftentimes the human resources director is, in
fact, the best person to sit on the WIB as opposed to the president of the company.
This is for obvious reasons. The human resource professionals have the passion
for the workforce. We need to understand from each other’s camp, what's going
to help us do a better job of economic development. It's part of their job to fill
jobs. It’s about making it easy for them to participate. (Howard)

Also, Jordan shared his perspective on the diversity of the WIB:

A number of the educational organizations are involved on the WIB. For
instance, we have the community college and two local universities. The
community college is hugely involved. I think also the fact that local businesses
are involved. You can determine whether the training of the workforce is
adequate by having them at the table. You also have “cross-over” memberships
with the chamber of commerce and the economic development organization.
Also on the WIB are people from County. The other is the economic development
organization. There is a good blend of people such as the economic development
organization, education and workforce organizations. The WIB is also comprised
of non-profits. The WIB capitalizes on the membership to find out about the
issues that are out there. (Jordan)
Although the instigator for the collaborative partnerships was the WIA’s required structure of mandated and non-mandated partners, the participants indicated that they are willing partners. They collaborated to improve individuals’ employability skills and to ultimately have an impact on the economic health of the County.

For example, Howard said that in the County, everyone must come together to address workforce issues. He further explained:

We need our higher education, our junior colleges, our grade schools, our private training providers as well as the economic development people in the County. Collaboration needs people to collaborate. It's one thing to talk about collaboration, but to actually work cooperatively and collaboratively; you have to have people that are actually doing it. I think that's what the WIB offers. It makes sense from an economic development standpoint, and on the County level, that the County economic development organization has a working relationship with the WIB. The manager [of the WIB] is on my Board. What unites us is this common theme of working together. (Howard)

Irene spoke about the factors that influence the WIB to involve employers:

They want to engage them to serve on boards, to be on policy committees and to get their employees involved. From an economic perspective, by the virtue of being a business, generating taxes, contributing to the local economy and by paying salaries, they do have a large influence. We have capitalized on that in the past is by engaging them in surveys as I already mentioned. Certainly, having them on the board is good. We have representatives from different private services serving on the Board. They are involved in various committees. We have different programs throughout the year such as the ones that come out of the Youth Council. Businesses are also involved by being sponsors. Another way of engaging them is asking them to be a worksite when we have a program that needs their involvement. (Irene)

Drew explained how they engage and how they work together. He summed it up this way:

We work with the economic development organization. We also work with the local businesses to determine and identify their needs. We do this together with the education representatives who sit on the Board. We get all those people on the same page. We also conduct surveys. We send surveys to local employers
and to ask them to answer the questions on the surveys. We want to know the problems they are having hiring qualified individuals and to tell us other things that they need so we know how to approach those issues. (Drew)

The contributions of the collaborative partners in the County have had an impact; the participants lauded the work of a few. For instance, they frequently mentioned the executive from the economic development organization and other partners as an example of having the right people at the table. The consensus of the participants is demonstrated through the statements shown in Figure 11:

Participants’ Perceptions on Cross Over Membership

"It’s nice to have Howard from the economic development corporation on the Board. This is a nice overlay because he represents a lot of different businesses and their interests. In terms of having a prepared and ready workforce."(Brook)

"One of the good things about our WIB is that the County economic development corporation leader participates on the WIB. He brings us up-to-date on the relationships they have with businesses in the County. They are very proactive in helping businesses. Also, there is high level of trust between educators, employers and government." (Gray)

"He brings a lot to the table. He works with start-up businesses and businesses that move into the County. He helps identify the needs of the businesses. He understands that even if new businesses come to the area, and we don’t have the qualified people to fill their jobs—it is not going to work. The WIB also partners with manufacturing association of the County to offer workshops to the community." (Frank)

"There is a good blend of people [representing different areas] such as the economic development corporation, education and workforce organizations. The WIB is also comprised of non-profits. The Board capitalizes on the [broad] membership to find out about the issues that are out there." (Howard)

"We work with the County’ economic development corporation. We also work with the local businesses to determine and identify their needs. We do this together with the education representatives who sit on the Board." (Drew)
In addition to drawing the right people to the WIB, the participants believed that collaborating and partnering with key organizations was vital to their success. They stated that one of the most important partners of the WIB was the local community college. They believed the involvement and support of the community college was vital to the success of the WIB’s efforts.

Generally speaking, all the participants had a common understanding of the role of the community college. They described the two-year institution as a training resource as well as a partner. They articulated the purpose of the two-year institution as a provider of technical education. Thus, they understood the college as a place where students acquire the knowledge and skills required for the labor market. They also viewed the role of the community college as important in terms of offering quality and affordable education. The common voice about the perception, the role and the commitment from the local community college is illustrated in the following narratives.

For example, Brook said: “The community college is playing a huge benefit to our entire society in terms of helping prepare people for educational opportunities. This is from a cost standpoint and from an individual standpoint. Community colleges are our future” (Brook).

In general, the participants expressed their satisfaction with the collaborations between the WIB and the local community college. Moreover, some perceived the community college as being one of the best partners. Howard said: “by far the best partner, in our case, is our local community college, hands down.” He further explained:
To get the president to sit on the Workforce Investment Board, I think that's a good place to start. The other thing is to encourage the key community college staffers that are running the WIA funded programs to attend the Workforce Investment Board meetings. They do here. That's pretty simple just get them engaged. The good thing is, when the environment is good, when the leadership encourages it, and it doesn't act parochial, they don't think parochial. The staff wants to participate because it will help them be more successful with their jobs. I think that is pretty simple. (Howard)

Jordan’s echoed Howard’s observations about the involvement of the local community college:

The college is the only community college that is involved with the WIB. The community college is heavily represented on the board. Eileen, the president of the college is involved. She typically has two or three representatives from the divisions of the college. It’s about process; best practices and also it is about active engagement and active involvement. A lot of the services are provided through the college. There is active partnership between the WIB and the college. Both the WIB and the college highly value their relationship and actively participate with each other. (Jordan)

Drew expressed his view of the effectiveness and quality of services provided by the community college. In Drew’s words:

As far as shaping skills and training offerings a lot of that is done through our collaborations with community colleges, local colleges and employers. The representatives from education who sit on the WIB always amaze me with their knowledge and their willingness to create programs for the local businesses. They're very good at engaging with others to apply for grants and things like that. They bring information to the table to help us qualify people for jobs. They’ve worked with us with interns. They helped us write a survey and to do the analysis. One of the best practices is to engage them, and we do because they are on the WIB. They also engage us because they care about what they are teaching their students. They want to teach them the things that they need to know to find employment. (Drew)

Drew’s insight of the community college is echoed by Frank’s opinion:

The college has a keen sense of the needs of the industry. They provide quite a bit of local training to the various companies. My experience is with our local community college alone. One the reasons I am familiar with it is because of the connection to the Workforce Investment Board. The WIB has worked with the college to train employees in the area. The Workforce Investment Board has been
working with the college to provide grant funding and provide training dollars, things of that nature. There's a partnership there that I am pretty sure will go on because it is very effective. (Frank)

The collaborative partnership with community colleges is of mutual benefit, said Gray:

By keeping them engaged, they know what we are doing. We know what they are doing. By having them at the table, we give them wonderful opportunities to not only have a voice, but also to see and hear the things that are going on in County. The training of the colleges and the training of the WIB agencies are things that I want to emphasize. The WIB does a good job in preparing people for the future. You have to have the people for those jobs. I think the work of the WIB and the colleges, whatever training programs they are producing, are pivotal for the County and the WIB. As I said earlier, we want the right people to do the right jobs. The WIB, the colleges, and the employees play a very important role in producing the right things. (Gray)

Irene, shares similar views and provides an example of a collaborative effort:

The community college in collaboration with the WIB is very engaged in offering some of the training programs. Currently one of the things we’re working with the community college is the ACT program. People can earn these badges by taking the ACT WorkKeys® [A job skills assessment system that helps employers select, hire, train, develop, and retain a high-performance workforce.]. They can show their potential employers that they have certain credentials in different fields. They come out with a certain set of competencies that are proven and tested in math, reading, and language skills. We can take that kind of a program and prove to businesses that these students or perspective employees coming out of our programs are going to be reducing their costs for building their workforce. Then they’re going to be more and more engaged. I think they have to see best value and the return on their investment for any kind of time. That's the key. (Irene)

Kennedy described the responsiveness of the college and went on to share a partnership between her school district and the WIB:

It’s easy working with them. They say “Okay, you need this program.” We can design this program to meet these needs. It’s staying abreast of where the jobs are in and really serving as the link to those employers. I am particularly excited about the “My Future Scholarship” piece that I was talking about. Students will have advanced learning, but the ultimate goal is for them to have a job. That is the best practice. It’s always linking it to that job, that well-paying job in which they can provide for their family. It is a sustainable job. (Kennedy)
The remarks of the participants were consistent with the views of the college’s president who assessed the college’s involvement and collaboration with the WIB. She also believed that there is a correlation between workforce development and the economic growth of the county. Her role, the college’s role as a member of the WIB is significant. In her own words:

It means that we are serious about partnerships with business because the leader of the college is at the table. I take this partnership, this role very seriously. We are developing our community members. We are providing them with the education and training necessary to improve their lives, which improves our economy, which brings more businesses into the area. (Eileen)

According to the participant stories drawing leaders to a common table was only the first step in the process of building a collaborative engagement.

**Fostering and engaging WIB members.** The participants agreed that being a member of the WIB was not a title they were given because they held influential roles in the community. They understood that their seat on the WIB involved meeting the expectations and responsibilities of being a WIB member. The manager, they stated, has an onboarding process to acclimate new members to the WIB, which includes providing them with a list of the expectations. For example, as members of the WIB, they were encouraged to collaborate and to participate in one or more of the three committees. The participants not only said that they understood their responsibility, but they also valued their involvement on the WIB. The joint perspectives on how they each navigate the work of the WIB and how it is coordinated and advanced are illustrated in the participants’ narratives.

As an example, Jordan communicated his experience working with the manager and of his committee work:
I will talk relatively to the manager. She solicits input from us and there is a requirement from WIB members to be on committees. You just can’t attend the larger meetings. I actually participate in one of the subcommittees. The other one is that you see progress being made. The topics are relevant on the agenda. The manager runs a good organization. The data helps. The manager is data driven. It’s relevant to things that I think are important to education and communities. It’s about being asked. They want to know what is important to me. My involvement translates into actions that are important for my company’s values.

(Jordan)

Howard also supported Jordan’s perspective of the WIB’s structure and the importance of committee work:

We also have active committees. I think that most of the private sector businesses are on a committee, whether it’s the policy committee or the systems and trends committee or the executive committee. I think that helps getting them involved. Also, the people that we have on committees representing the community college are exceptional. They are the people running the programs that receive funding from the WIA. (Howard)

While some of the members might not immediately find worth in committee work, they do eventually, said Ashley:

I can certainly see that the people that are involved in the Youth Council are very committed. They are really, really committed to making our youth successful. They work at it. It was interesting to me to see that the guy from hospital was so engaged in the Youth Council meeting. He finally saw something that was going to be of value to the hospital. Now that he saw that, he is going to get involved. In the first few meetings, I could see that he was distracted. I don’t think he felt that it was going to be of value to him. You have to see the value to get engaged. Otherwise you just go sit at the table and you listen. (Ashley)

The participation in committees also provided members with a sense of ownership and responsibility for the work of the WIB. For example, Brook said, “Part of the role of my committee is approving the course selections. We have to trust that the education is going to be valuable and that the content is going to be relevant to what the real needs are.”
Cesar also explained his role as a WIB member in accomplishing the strategic goals of the WIB:

The goals and some of these workforce strategies are derived from those [committee] meetings. When we are in subcommittees or in a Workforce Investment Board meeting, we get the numbers. We analyze those numbers and ask questions. Most of us are pretty smart to figure out if things are turning out right or not. We have the responsibility to offer our opinions. When it comes down to it, we as WIB members do have the influence to ensure the Workforce Investment Board outcomes are met. The WIB itself makes sure that what’s being done is the right thing and that we are producing the right outcomes. I think we really do. There are representatives from different areas that lend their two cents worth. Bottom line, when you measure that, are we doing pretty well in the County and in the Workforce Investment Board. (Cesar)

Correspondingly, Drew further defined committee work:

The Systems and Trends Committee examines and analyses the needs of our community as far as job training and job openings and how that affects our economy. We are trying to look at programs to decide if those programs have any value or merit towards creating jobs, good paying jobs in the community. We look at that first, do the analysis and then we forward the results to the full Board. (Drew)

Irene echoed the process of committee work and states her observations:

Our process is such that we as WIB members can bring in ideas for establishing goals that we are going to work on. Typically these goals are for the short term, for a year. We also have a five-year planning process. In the Strategic Policy Committee, we usually start with our mission and then we drive down to specific work plans for the upcoming years. Those goals are thoroughly discussed at the committee level. Then we bring them forward to the entire membership. (Irene)

As described by the participants, the manager coordinated the efforts of the WIB to ensure that the appropriate programs and services were created and implemented. The participants’ comments indicated that their role as members is to sit on committees to advise on the content of the programs and the eligibility requirements.

Participants reported one fundamental aspect of the WIB: the communication that ensued at the committee and the WIB meetings. They stated that the actual exchange of
ideas, the sharing of their distinct expertise and the unique character each member had helped them work toward a common goal.

Eileen also commented on accountability and communication:

You hold each other accountable for the outcome so that you make progress. Everyone feels the responsibility for the community. In this case is the workforce community. In our case, we are responsible to our students. When we work on a project, everyone feels responsibility and accountability for that project. You have to have everyone on the same page to get the intended results. We are given a lot of data about labor market issues in our local area. Because of the great data we get, it spurs communication. If it weren’t for the communication it would be based on a personal opinion. (Eileen)

Jordan stated that there are three conditions that contribute to the effectiveness of the WIB: First is having an organized structure. Second, is having leaders who model positive behavior; and third is having leaders who are effective communicators. He stated that it is also essential to have a safe space to fuel the motivation that brought them together. In his voice:

We need to create a safe environment. You create an environment where trust is high. Structure helps. The nice thing about the WIB is that it is nicely structured you know the rules. The meeting structure is pretty straightforward. The materials are sent ahead of time. So you don’t have people reading in the meetings trying to understand the issue, unless they choose to. It’s community people trying to find common purpose and common goals around helping other folks and helping the community. It’s about having a WIB president and a WIB manager that are setting the standards and are good about drawing people out. It’s about asking people’s opinions and soliciting feedback. If you focus on how we can address the labor market issues and how we can help the community, everything follows from that. (Jordan)

The narratives of the participants indicated that the WIB nurtured an environment for members to make valuable contributions, to share their expertise and knowledge and to learn from each other. According to their narratives, it was evident that the person
most responsible for managing the WIB was the manager. These narratives lead to the next discussion.

**Leadership: Consistent Source of Support and Stability**

The participants, in many of their statements, characterized their leadership through their motivation to address workforce issues, their active involvement and their ongoing communication. However, consistently and throughout all their responses, the participants stated that the ongoing communication and support they receive from the manager was fundamental to their success. In their judgment, the manager was the “backbone” of the WIB. In their collective assessment, the manager possessed specific skills and characteristics that were essential in achieving the mission of the WIB. Specifically, they claimed that the manager performed well in planning, managing, and supporting workforce initiatives through ongoing research, ongoing communication, data collection, and reporting. They also viewed the manager as dedicated and knowledgeable. Thus, the consensus of the participants was that the manager’s leadership; interpersonal, communication, “number crunching” and report writing skills were important and essential qualities in achieving their mission. In addition, some members credited the manager for the effectiveness of the WIB when compared to other WIBs. The participants’ descriptions of the manager’s leadership skills were consistent with the number of times her name was mentioned, 86. Figure 12 illustrates the third theme, leadership.
Leadership: Consistent Source of Support and Stability

The narratives of the participants further illuminate their assessment of the manager’s work, her effectiveness, and her overall performance. The WIB when compared to others is very well organized and efficient, they said. As an illustration, Ashley who had only served on the WIB for a few months at the time of the interview summed up the general opinion of the participants:

She measures everything and they report on everything. I know that they have all kinds of measurements and tools. Paige [the manager] is so close to the heartbeat of what is going. You can see what’s happening by the numbers of people that are serviced. The participation that this WIB has is better than any other county’s WIB when you compare them. The efforts here are really good. It's probably the quality of the people. They are really, really invested. (Ashley)
Similarly, Irene expressed her evaluation of the manager:
We are very fortunate because we have a very talented and knowledgeable executive director. I believe this County is probably more active in some ways as I’ve learned from some of the other Workforce Investment Boards in the area. (Irene)

Drew shared a similar perspective:

Our local WIB is very effective. You can’t say about other WIBs. I’ve heard from a person who sits on another WIB who confirms the fact that other WIBs are not as effective as we are. (Drew)

Frank echoed other members’ observations about the effectiveness of the manager and the WIB:

The WIB has been effective. The level of participation that the Workforce Investment Board has is huge. Since I've been on the Board, some companies have thanked us because they are now finding qualified employees. The staff of the Workforce Investment Board has done a pretty phenomenal job of making sure that the people on the Workforce Investment Board participate. For example, the annual calendar is established at the end of the year to determine what the calendar should contain the following year. There are some companies that have 300, 400, 5,000 employees. These companies may have some greater sense of power or authority. In regards to the decisions that are made, the Workforce Investment Board, Paige and her staff have done a good job of making sure that there is equality. I don't think that's always easy. Also, Paige and her staff do a very good job of bringing to light the specific areas and concerns bout legislation or in local laws that are going to have an immediate impact on the businesses. (Frank)

Some participants expressed their satisfaction for not having local politics as part of the WIB governance. For example, Eileen said:

I don’t see our WIB as a very political entity. I have been associated with WIBs that were very political and they were not using the resources in a global way. The influence that the businesses have in our WIB is that the staff has a good finger on the pulse of the businesses. They do this through research. (Eileen)

In addition to the various observations about the manager, Kennedy described the WIB’s measurement system:
I think it's very important that we have accountability measures and that we have standard accountability measures across the Board. Again, I know that this is something that Paige as the leader is fighting for. We all need to be using the same accountability measures so that we can compare with other WIBs across the state. I really do think that it comes from the leadership. There's got to be someone spearheading, someone setting the tone. I think that's what's important and that's what makes this successful. (Kennedy)

The participants, consistently and throughout their responses mentioned the return on the investment as a metric used to evaluate their workforce investment. Cesar explained:

The Workforce Investment Board of the County stands very well compared to others. We are doing some pretty good things. You can gauge the return on the investment based on the measurements. We have some wonderful folks in the Workforce Investment Board helping us achieve them. We really do. One of the things that we always point out is the return on the investment. For every dollar we put in, we get plus three dollars in return. When it comes down to it that is what you want to be able to accomplish. As one of the members of the Board, you do not want to just go through the motions. You want to feel that you are accomplishing something. You want to put the Workforce Investment Act into action. You want to put them together the folks that are looking for the jobs, and that they are actually getting jobs. And even further… that they are getting some monetary value back and then measured by that. (Cesar)

The effectiveness of the WIB can also be measured by the uniformity of their efforts according to Howard:

The strategies are continuous. They are coincidental so the Workforce Investment Board and the economic development organization’s workforce strategies are identical. It works very well. It makes more sense for us to work together and the sustenance of this success is the fact that the Board meetings are topical. They are meaningful. We don't feel like there's rubber-stamping activity. We also do it through ongoing research and sharing it with the WIB. (Howard)

Kennedy who was also a fairly new WIB member at the time of the interview, shared her perceptions about the measuring systems of the WIB:

As a committee, we sat down together and analyzed our old goals. The first question was, “Did we meet our previous goals? Why did we meet them or why not?” Some goals were met some of them were not for a variety of different
reasons. If they weren't met, “Is the goal worthy to have and is this something we want to continue to strive for? And then, “What are the new goals that we want and what are the indicators of success for those goals?” It was a very collaborative process and Paige and her team would take those conversations and put them together in documents. I think we reviewed them probably four times to make sure that they were absolutely correct and reflective of all the conversations before we finally voted and said, “Yes, these are the goals.” (Kennedy)

Linda describes how the manager handles communication:

Paige takes the contributions of members very seriously. She definitely tries to do the research and if someone raises a point that’s valid, myself for instance, she will pull others to make sure that it's not just one employer’s opinion but that it's actually common to our community base of employers. (Linda)

As illustrated in the narratives of the participants, the WIB’s manager not only plays a significant role coordinating and advancing the mission of the WIB, but she also has the ability to collaborate, coordinate, and support the members of the WIB.

**Reflections**

The accounts from the participants provided an exciting indication of what might be possible. The WIB’s effective collaborative partnerships combine two of the most powerful influences for solving workforce issues: the collective mission and vision of the participants and their active involvement. Despite the fact that the WIA’s policy directives brought them together, these influential leaders have developed some extraordinary practices.

The participants came together from manufacturing, banking, health, education, logistics management, union trade, economic, and government sectors to improve the County. These influential leaders realized that a collaborative approach was the only way to tackle workforce issues. They stated that no agency, organization or person alone could come up with workforce solutions.
The participants’ shared vision for change and their common understanding that addressing unemployment necessitated a collective approach helped them create an effective collaborative partnership. To solve workforce issues they came up with agreed upon actions with related agencies in the County. For example, the WIB worked with the economic development organization to address the needs of the labor market. Together, they visited companies, they surveyed employers and they provided them with resources. The members who represent K-2, community colleges and four year institutions worked together to provide scholarships to high school students and to develop training programs. The participants shared that their mutually reinforcing activities helped them learn and solve problems together. As volunteers, the participants’ predominantly expressed a sense of achievement and motivation to share their knowledge and their passion for improving the overall health of the County with others who had the same views. To ensure their efforts were successful, they created a strategic plan, they developed performance measurements, they discussed their progress.

The WIB recognized that their success needed to be measured and reported. Therefore, they developed a system for consistently collecting data and measuring results on a number of indicators. Although the WIB complied with the WIA’s core performance measures, the WIB determined that those measures were not enough. The manager established ways to determine their return on their investment. Measuring their outcomes ensured that the WIB’s efforts were aligned with the needs of the community. In addition, the measurement system enabled the WIB to make both the employees and the WIB members accountable. The participants of the study shared that the WIB had made some recent advances toward the way they measure the outcomes of their
programs. Their statements suggested that the WIB processes change to improve the efficiency of their programs.

Engaging members in the WIB was important and accomplished by developing trust and respect for each other. The WIB met six times a year and committees had a standing meeting schedule. The WIB members received the meeting material prior to each meeting. This gave them the opportunity to review the agenda and the issues before each meeting. The participants shared that their meetings “were topical; they started on time and ended on time,” said Howard. Most importantly, he stated that “rubber stamping” was not a practice of the WIB. In addition, communication also took place between meetings. While the WIB meetings provided an important space for members to come together, the work was done at the committee meeting level. Most of the participants described how they engaged to develop strategic planning and how they made collective decisions. The participants’ shared experiences of their involvement in committee work indicate that the WIB fostered an environment of trust and also provided a safe space for members to learn and solve problems together.

Although the participants recognized the value they provided as influential, knowledgeable and experienced leaders, consistently and throughout all their responses, they stated that their work was successful due to the WIB’s supporting infrastructure. As the participants of the study pointed out, the manager of the WIB was the person who made sure the pieces of the puzzle fit together. She made sure that the pieces were all put in the proper shapes to make sure their big picture (vision) was accomplished, they said. The manager of the WIB focused on the most strategic issues, on getting the right people to the table, and working on the most pressing problems using the most appropriate
processes and resources, the participants shared. The support they received from the manager was fundamental to their success, they believed. In their judgment, the manager was the “backbone” of the WIB. In their collective assessment, the manager possessed specific skills and characteristics that were essential in achieving the mission of the WIB. This consistent source of support and stability is illustrated in Figure 13:
Consistent Source of Support and Stability

The facets that made the WIB successful are identified as follows:

- Having the commitment and passion for workforce from both the WIB members and the staff.
- Developing and sustaining effective collaborative partnerships inside and outside the WIB that led to regional strategic workforce planning.
- Developing performance measurement and a monitor system for their programs.

**Figure 13.** Midwestern WIB: Five aptitudes for stable leadership.
• Having consistent support and stability to lead and manage the WIB’s ongoing work.

The facets that make the WIB successful were embedded in the WIB’s work and collaborative efforts. Thus, the members of the WIB were not only influential leaders, but also individuals who had the passion for addressing workforce and economic development issues.

Together they developed performance measures and monitoring systems to make sure their efforts were aligned with the needs of the community. Through the participants’ reactions to the questions, the things that worked well for the WIB were identified. By far, the most impactful approaches were their ability to build and sustain strategic regional workforce planning and the fact that they had a leader with the aptitudes to support their work. The collaborative approach as defined by the participants is illustrated in Figure 14.
“Collaboration is working together, but one of the unique things about our partnerships is the collaboration we have,” Gray

Figure 14. Midwestern WIB: Representation of collaboration.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

Watching my neighbors, friends, family, and many other people struggle because they do not have enough education and training, do not have a job, and are on the verge of poverty is like living in a parallel world; the life that would have been mine, had it not been for my love for learning.

Some say education is available to everyone in the United States, yet there are many people without it. The lack of education is a major impediment to accessing well-paying jobs. As a result, many Americans forgo economic opportunities. The WIA, the federal training system, charged with assisting individuals in need of training and employment, has failed, or at best, it has only produced “fairly effective” results (Biden, 2014). The Workforce Investment Act was recently reauthorized as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and signed by President Obama on July 22, 2014 (H.R. 803). This reauthorization might answer the questions that remain regarding the effectiveness of the nation’s workforce system and also provide renewed focus (and hope) on job training and placement.

A Blueprint for a Successful Workforce Investment Board

Today’s societal issues transcend local, regional, state, and even national boundaries. Therefore, the exploration of collaborative partnerships that leads to effective outcomes is not only encouraged, but also required by those receiving funding
from the federal government (Biden, 2014). The results of this study illuminate the underlying purposes of Appreciative Inquiry of discovering what works (Copperrider, 2008). The impetus for applying this approach was to learn from the accomplishments of the local WIB members—the participants of this study. Moreover, it focused on learning the participants’ personal stories within the WIB that were embedded with enthusiasm, vision, and pride. Through carefully crafted appreciative questions that engaged the participants in sharing their experiences in a way that gave vitality to their individual experiences on the WIB, the findings of this qualitative case study illustrate how the WIB’s effective strategies are spread through collaboration and alignment of education (K-12—Higher Education), employers, labor unions, government, economic development organizations, and related agencies.

What is the Driving Force for Success in Collaborative Partnerships?

As mandated by the WIA, employers represent more than half of the membership of the Workforce Investment Boards. This requirement was designed to involve employers in strategic planning as well as specific labor market training. However, previous studies found that many WIBs around the nation were unable to engage employers in a meaningful way. Furthermore, those charged with workforce development believed that employer engagement was neither necessary nor vital to their strategy (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007; GAO, 2012). Subsequently, many WIBs did not take into consideration the context of current labor market needs from the employers’ perspective. Likewise, other WIBs engaged employers simply to fulfill the WIA’s composition requirement (Hopkins et al., 2009).
Contrary to former approaches to workforce development, there is a renewed emphasis on engaging employers to not only determine the local job market needs, but also to design training programs that are responsive to those needs as required by the reauthorization of WIOA (Biden, 2014). Consistent with the Ready to Work: Job-Driven Training and American Opportunity Report (2014), that outlines requirements and best practices for workforce development, the WIB fostered involvement from a variety of stakeholders by developing trust in a workforce program that was responsive to both employees and to employers (Biden, 2014).

As stated by the participants, developing an effective WIB required moving beyond recruiting members simply to fill a seat to recruiting the right members, people who not only understand the labor market, but who also want to make a difference. A central part of the participants’ strategy was to involve all relevant stakeholders including employers, industry associations, government, economic development organizations, education, government and other related agencies. The WIB successfully recruited members from a variety of sectors who had a sense of social responsibility and those who understood workforce development. The emphasis, however, should not be on recruiting members, but also on retaining them.

The members joined the WIB because they wanted to share information about labor market needs and to match those trends with the programs created by the WIB. Most importantly, they were highly interested in improving the economic vitality of the County. Likewise, the WIB recruited them because they were influential members of the community and they had experience in the labor market, economic development, government, education, and labor associations. The process of recruiting them also
involved outlining the responsibilities of being on the WIB. The WIB set the stage about the expectations from the members, and they accepted them. Likewise, they retained the members by providing them with opportunities to make meaningful contributions.

Another thing that worked well for WIB, according to the participants, was that the motivation for being on the WIB was matched with the pursuit of shared goals: Their collective goals were:

- Imparting individuals with appropriate skills that have job market value.
- Ensuring that employers had qualified workers.
- Creating jobs and expanding businesses in the County; thus strengthening the economic vitality of the County.

The participants’ intrinsic motivation, views and performance on the WIB were consistent with the belief that genuine collaborative partnerships require time and commitment (Carnwell & Carson, 2008; Thomson & Perry, 2006). Although the attempts of many WIBs fell short of WIA’s expectations to involve employers and other partners, the WIB membership was comprised of influential leaders who were motivated to join the WIB by their desire to make a difference in their County.

The participants’ collective list of the WIBs’ best practices to draw the right leaders to the table were:

a) Building, strengthening, and sustaining relationships with businesses and other organizations.
b) Identifying individuals who have a personal and business interest in today’s labor market from a variety of cross sectors and organizations.
c) Inviting them to serve on the WIB.
d) Sustaining their involvement by providing them with meaningful and relevant opportunities to contribute (i.e., Invite them to help solve problems, involve them in strategic planning and on-site visits with employers, ask them to talk to job seekers to share what they look in employees, capitalize on their strengths when involving them in the WIB’s activities).

Providing a space for new members to get to know each other personally could also enhance the WIB collaborative practices. This could be accomplished through engaging new members and existing members in ice breakers and “sharing important moments” before and after meetings to provide them with a sense of belonging and to further strengthen a community of workforce leaders that not only have passion for workforce, but also understand and know each other personally.

**Transforming Collaboration**

While policy directives create the imperative for WIBs to work together, the collaborations inside and outside the WIB, that was the focus of this study, provide an insight of what might be possible when a group of committed individuals work together.

Unlike other WIBs that struggled developing collaborative relationships with employers and other related agencies (GAO, 2012), the WIB worked with a variety of cross sector partners, locally and regionally, to provide a network for employment, workforce training and related services. The findings of this study suggest that the WIB’s capacity to draw a diverse group of influential leaders to the table that possessed different perspectives was one of their most cherished accomplishments and one that was paramount to their success.
For example, one participant explained that having a diverse group of people on the WIB was not only important, but also critical to achieving workforce development goals. He also stated that an additional element that helped the WIB was having members with the passion for workforce development. Subsequently, the relationships built by the WIB were the glue that kept the collaborative efforts together. These efforts are consistent with existing research on the benefits of relationship building (i.e., Straus, 2002; Gray 1989; Linden, 2002). Congruent with Appreciate Inquiry, the participants also discovered that through their involvement, they learned and solved problems with people who shared their same knowledge and passion for workforce development. The participants’ collective descriptions of what they believed were their best approaches to building effective collaborations are outlined below:

a) Drawing influential leaders to a common table.

b) Bringing awareness about the WIB and related services.

c) Developing mechanisms to learn about new and existing employers products/services and determining their workforce needs (on-site visits, working in concert with the economic development corporation, inviting them to the WIB meetings and conducting employer surveys).

d) Establishing ongoing communication with employers, the WIB members, and educational providers.

e) Treating all stakeholders as partners in workforce development.

f) Engaging employers in the development of relevant and needed labor market training.

g) Ensuring industry sector needs are met.
h) Developing collaborative partnerships with employers to provide participants of workforce programs with work-based learning experiences (internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, and problem-based learning).

i) Developing mutual trust and respect among collaborative partners through the quality of their programs.

j) Having a reciprocal relationship with the community college and working together to develop labor market relevant training, providing academic testing, and certifications. This is contrary to the findings of previous research (e.g., Kerk, 2008) that assert that businesses and education do not always speak the same language and rarely build effective partnerships due to the differences that exist with organizational styles and culture.

k) Having active involvement from key players such as the president of the community college and workforce development staff.

l) Having close relationships with the economic development corporation of the County and cross membership on their respective boards.

m) Establishing regional partnerships to create a network for employment.

The findings of this study contribute significantly to existing research on the value and benefit of building collaborations between education and industry (i.e., McKergow & Clarke, 2002; Ryan & Heim, 1997; Bragg & Russman, 2007; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Ryan & Heim, 1997; Kerka, 2008). Hence, the best practices outlined above, offer a promising cross-sector collaborative partnership model for those interested in incorporating job-driven factors into their workforce programs.
To further provide context to the experiences shared by the participants the following narratives provide a glimpse of the WIB’s workforce effective practices:

a) The WIB partnered with a metropolitan alliance to develop industry cluster profile reports for four industry clusters: biomedical life sciences, business, technical & financial, manufacturing, and transportation and logistics. The alliance is a coalition that comes together to share employment information and best practices. The regional collaborations are only part of the many ways in which the WIB has developed relationships inside and outside boundaries. The WIB has a record of working with employers, trade associations, higher education, the K-12 system, state and local agencies to create job-driven training programs. To emphasize, the collaborative partnerships that were formed at the WIB provide a network of employment, training, and other related services to help individuals overcome barriers to employment.

b) One of the examples of WIB’s collaborative efforts was the Certified Work Ready Community initiative. It was endorsed by more than ten local and regional agencies that work with the WIB. Although in its infancy stages, this program has the potential to save employers resources for recruiting employees. The ACT National Career Readiness Certificate qualifies individuals. It provides them with a certification that verifies that a job seeker has the reading and math skills, problem solving and critical thinking skills, workplace behaviors and personal habits that are the foundation of success in the workplace. The ultimate goal is for the County to become a “Work Ready Community.” In their estimation, this would assist employers with the recruiting process because job seekers are
awarded badges that demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Also, the members of the WIB oftenunderscored the importance of providing individuals with worked-based learning opportunities.

c) The WIB also provided opportunities for employers through the various events such as the “Boot Camp.” This program was designed to bring together employers with job seekers to learn from one another.

d) The WIB produced a “Where are the Jobs” report to provide information on the number and types of jobs available in the area and regionally. According to the participants, the members receive this report regularly. The manager used information technology to do a “spider crawl” of all the websites as stated by Howard. Also, “The County Economic Report” provided a glimpse of employment changes by industry and occupation as well as unemployment rates and average wage data. This report also included new hire wage information. Likewise, “The Unemployment Chart” included unemployment rates for each county in the area, the state and the nation for the current month, previous month, and a monthly comparison of the previous years.

e) The WIB has developed a system for collecting and measuring results that are consistent with a list of indicators that helped them determine the effectiveness of their programs. In addition to the federally mandated performance measures, the WIB has developed its own measurement metrics. Almost every member related that for every dollar the WIB spent, they received three plus dollars in return. The calculation was made based on the cost of training and what the employment situation was at the time the report came out. Mostly, the members were aware of
where the funding resources originated from and in which programs they were spent. The WIB measured the results of all their programs through their committees and then reported the results to the entire WIB. Kennedy shared: “We look at how many customers were served and how many people completed the community college career program.” Further, she stated that the criteria they use to measure their programs changes accordingly. “Every goal has indicators. We use those indicators to evaluate the outcomes. We also have checkpoints along the way. There is always data provided. That is done on a consistent basis.”

The data generated through the measurements are utilized as evidence-based decision making. The comments from the participants suggest that the WIB utilizes evidence-based practices to improve the quality of their practices and programs. The Ready to Work: Job-Driven Training and American Opportunity Report, from Vice President Joe Biden to President Obama’s request to investigate workforce programs in the U.S. to ensure these programs share a single mission: to provide workers with the skills needed for today’s labor market. The report outlines the recommendations for improvement based the vice-president’s findings. The WIB has already implemented some of the recommended features for improving job training. For example, the WIB has a process for engaging employers before designing training programs. Although, not full blown, they work with employers to offer worked-based learning opportunities. The WIB collects and makes use of data to ensure accountability and inform what programs need to be created and implemented. Likewise, they measure and evaluate training programs. The WIB has built regional partnerships to coordinate efforts. Of the seven recommendations offered in the report, the WIB does very well with most of them. To enhance their
services and to comply with the Vice President’s blue print for a shared mission on job
training, the WIB would benefit from enhancing its work to promote stackable degrees.
Helping participants of the programs progress in their careers by obtaining new training
and credentials that facilitate transition to postsecondary programs can benefit both the
individuals and the County. Another area recommended by the Vice President is to help
individuals by breaking down the barriers to accessing job-driven training and hiring.
Increasing its efforts to create a seamless process to help those individuals whose
characteristics prevent them from securing a job (i.e., lack of transportation, childcare) is
another way the WIB to enhance its great practices.

**Leadership: The “Glue” that Binds the WIB**

According to Amey et al (2007), a key element in a partnership is the
identification of a champion. A champion is the person who advocates for the initiative.
Commonly, the champion believes in the partnership and its goals. In addition to having
a champion, goals need to be established and evaluated. Lastly, ongoing feedback and
support is needed for sustaining partnerships (Amey et al., 2007). Similarly, Straus
(2002) posits that a leader who has the ability to create, communicate a vision, bring
others along to share commitment, design pathways to action, and focus on results is a
facilitative leader (Stratus, 2002).

Those in charge of the local WIB, analyzed in this study, also displayed the facets
of leadership described in these definitions. However, the work of the manager of the
local WIB was described as the “glue” that kept the WIB together and working
effectively. The most compelling evidence of the manager’s work was the number of
repetitive statements testifying to the best practices. The participants candidly stated that
their success was due to the support they received from the manager. Therefore, the supportive infrastructure they received from the manager was fundamental to their success.

Congruent with Appreciate Inquiry, the participants searched and provided a description of one very important element that makes the WIB flourish. Their assessment of what makes the WIB successful, in their view, was due to the capabilities and work of the manager. Other WIBS should seriously consider and evaluate the performance of those who are paid to manage the operations of the WIB. As the members stated, without a consistent source of support, knowledge, and stability, the WIB members alone could not move the WIB forward. Thus, this type of support could be replicated by other WIBs that wish to move from the status quo to creating a system that promotes economic competitiveness and pathways to job creation and employment.

Figure 15 demonstrates the facets of the effective implementation of the WIA programs at the WIB and Figure 16 illustrates the steps the WIB applied toward the successful implementation of workforce initiatives.
Steps Towards Successful Implementation of Workforce Initiatives

Figure 15. Midwestern WIB: Steps toward successful implementation of workforce initiatives.
Figure 16. Shifting gears for successful implementation of workforce initiatives.

The gears in this graphic illustrate the interlocking factors that suggest the constant shifting of the parts that are necessary to develop and implement effective workforce initiatives.

Finally, this study sought to discover success stories within the WIB. However, I also hope that the questions asked during the interviews served to foster the individual and collective analysis of the participants’ involvement on the WIB.

Significance of the Study

To summarize the discussion of the findings, several points are important to consider and reiterate. First, in terms of appreciative inquiry, this study uniquely positions the local WIB and its members as capable of building connections across the boundaries of power and authority and initiating effective and positive changes within the
community. Such capabilities effectively challenge, if not deconstruct, traditional roles of public service and public servants. The results of this study illuminate the power of effective pragmatic philosophies and actions geared toward the benefits of individuals and society. Solving the US workforce problems requires a collaborative effort on part of businessmen, educators, and community members. The findings of this study demonstrate that it is only through collective deliberative decision-making processes that the desirable results of our intentions can be achieved. To put it differently, the WIA initiatives necessitate the participation and collaboration of mandated and non-mandated partners.

In terms of social constructionism, this study demonstrates how, when space for collective inquiry and action is provided, individuals can construct mutually agreed decisions that lead to effective actions. Even though these individuals come from different and seemingly incongruent professional fields, they are capable of action based on consensus and overall benefit precisely because they are capable of critical reflexivity. This study clearly shows how various WIB members come to a realization that how co-dependent they are in today’s labor market in terms of availability and exchange of information, knowledge, and resources in order to be successful.

**Recommendations for Further Inquiry**

More research is certainly needed to evaluate the initiatives of various local WIBs. The results of this study are based on the experiences of approximately half of the local WIB members and therefore cannot be generalized. It is not the purpose of qualitative research to generalize from its findings. However, they are significant in that they intend to create a holistic picture of phenomena under investigation. In that regard,
this study is significant in terms of representing a detailed account of how one Midwestern WIB has succeeded in planning and launching a series of successful initiatives, thus contributing to effective workforce development in the United States.

Despite its obvious confines, this study fills in significant gaps in existing literature pertaining to workforce development. While there is extensive research on the performance of WIBs as a unit, the role of the members has not often been conceptualized in such detail as in this study. This inquiry complements the belief of many that working across sectors can produce valuable benefits (i.e., Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gray, 1989; Straus, 2002). Furthermore, the analysis is distinctive in that it focused on what works for the WIB. It identified the positive ways in which the WIB made a difference; hopefully, this study will provide renewed energy, vision, and greater action for change for those who work for the federal training system. The analysis might also help leaders; members of a WIB to examine the motivations that led them to join the WIB, their interactions with each other and their personal contributions, and their role building and sustaining collaborations inside and outside their boundaries.

In addition, the knowledge generated by this study can help members of other WIBs evaluate whether they have a shared vision to accomplish the goals of the federal training system, effective measurement systems, effective communication; the type of communication that streams among and within workforce networks, have mutually reinforcing activities (each member takes a specific set of activities drawing from their strengths, and aligning those activities with the actions of others), and have a director/manager who has the aptitudes required to keep them together and moving in the right direction as demonstrated by the WIB in a Midwestern state.
Finally, this study opens multitude of avenues of research on collaborations that lead to the effective implementation of the WIA, which was recently reauthorized as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). For example, examining the continuum of collaborative partnership types and their influence on workforce development systems might provide useful insights. Also, exploring the details of incentives and outcomes of collaborative efforts with employers, economic development organizations, government and all the players would provide a better understanding about the conditions that help sustain those collaborations overtime.

Another example is to conduct a reversed research focused on paid staff. The perceptions of the staff that are employed by the WIB would provide an evaluation of what works for them. Learning how, from their perspective, members of the WIB contribute to the overall goals, their shared vision, the support they provide to staff, and their practices engaging and participating on the WIB. This would further clarify whether the WIB is successful because the paid directors are effective, or determine whether it takes both, committed leaders and effective staff to succeed. Also, another research topic is an investigation of community colleges’ relationships with employers to learn what makes them effective and how these collaborations begin, and are sustained overtime and the outcomes that result from those collaborations. Lastly, because policy requirements continue to drive cross sector collaborations, future research might investigate engagement boundaries. For example what is the success rate of those WIBs that have effective collaborations with economic development organizations, the government and other related agencies? This type of research would illuminate and perhaps reinforce that both WIBs and economic development organizations are two
important players in workforce and economic development and thus, should work
together to help leverage resources and ultimately help individuals overcome barriers to
becoming and staying employed.

Final Reflections

Many years ago, I came to this country because it was my parents’ hope for a
better life, and worth the many struggles I faced in this great nation. There were no
friends. There were no places or people familiar to me. There were no words in which I
could describe what it felt to not understand a word of English and to have the feeling of
being invisible. Many people often referred to this country as the land of opportunity. I
often wondered what that meant because I certainly did not believe it was true during
those first few years of being here.

Through those early years, I learned a great deal. I learned to be a laborer, to
navigate the American culture, I learned the English language, and learned where to go
when I needed help. But it was not until twenty years later that I really began to
understand what these opportunities were and where to find them. I was fortunate though
because learning has always intrigued me.

A turning point in my life happened when I received my first college degree. My
employer at the time promoted me because he considered me qualified after I received
my two-year education. In this new job, I was immediately exposed to new
opportunities, new people. Most importantly, people began to see me. I was no longer
invisible. When I became interested in helping individuals who like me had come to this
country with nothing, it was mind-blowing to discover that people were interested in
joining my efforts. The latter point brings me to my early lessons on collaboration.
When I embarked on a journey to help others, I knew that I could not do it alone. I brought together the necessary voices, we worked together to identify the most pressing issues affecting the targeted population, and we built relationships and consensus. Together we used collaboration as a tool to help others. Fifteen years later, we have accomplished many projects. We are still working together. We are friends. We have trust and mutual respect for each other. Also, through each one of my jobs I have held in the last fifteen years, I have continued to work with various groups, but I often find that these groups are not effective for various reasons such as conflicting agendas, lack of a champion or leadership, lack of communication, disinterest from the members of the group, and disorganization. Building collaborations, I have learned, takes time, effort and sometimes, the right resources. Most importantly, having the right people. For this reason, I cherish my first lessons on collaboration. Through these groups, I have met the most wonderful people who have given me a space where I have the sense of belonging I yearned for some many years. Likewise, the findings of this study provide me with a sense of inspiration and yet another indication of how effective collaboration works and why it is essential.

To address workforce issues in the nation, it is important that the leaders charged with helping unemployed individuals and others find appropriate, responsive and innovative solutions. These solutions have the potential to emerge through engagement such as the type that not only engages people’s minds, but also their hearts. I am grateful for the opportunity to conduct this study, which further illuminates my knowledge on collaborations. As illustrated by the participants’ narratives, the participants were enthusiastic and were able and ready to create a powerful WIB. Also, every person I
interviewed was responsive, kind, respectful and supportive of this study. This suggests that their responses were also genuine. While this study found great practices, I also recognize that the WIB might have some areas where there are opportunities to enhance their work. I am confident that these influential leaders, members of the WIB, will continue to work together to enrich their work because they have essential and critical conditions for their collaborations to work. They are joined by a common intrinsic motivation: their desire to grow their economy. They want to share their opinions, their knowledge and their expertise to help others. And they believe in making a difference in the community. To finish my short story, I share the following not because I want the reader to think of me as someone special. I share it hoping that I can motivate those in charge of education and workforce development to help those (young and older) whose insecurities, personal characteristics and life situations prevent them from taking that first step towards education.

To date, I have achieved the highest level of education, I work in an institution that provides great educational opportunities to all people (something that I strongly believe), I have worked for the third most powerful man in the country, and I have founded a coalition to help a special group of people. I cannot begin to share all that I have learned but I can say one thing: Achieving an education is possible. I will not deny that I had varying levels of difficulty in my educational journey, but none of which were impossible. Through the help of the people who are charged with providing opportunities for training and employment, people have the potential to achieve in the same way I did and possibly a lot more.
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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM
Appendix A

Consent Form

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in the study, *Community College—Business Partnerships: Collaborative Leadership for the 21st-Century: A Case Study of a Workforce Investment Board (WIB) in the Midwest*, conducted by Lourdes (Lulu) Blacksmith, a doctoral candidate in Higher Education and Organizational Change at Benedictine University.

The purpose of this study is to investigate ways in which community colleges and business leaders develop and implement effective workforce programs that can assist Americans in obtaining and mastering the skills necessary to compete in the local and global job markets. This inquiry focuses specifically on the collaborative partnerships formed between business leaders—members of a local Workforce Investment Board (WIB)—and local community college leaders, who join in their efforts to provide individuals with academic and employment skills in a Midwestern regional area.

You are invited to participate in an interview that will last approximately 60-90 minutes at the location that is convenient for you. There are no risks associated with this research and your participation is strictly voluntary. The interview is comprised of a series of questions regarding the Workforce Investment Act, your experience working with Workforce Investment Board (s), and your perspectives on collaborative partnerships between community colleges and the private sector. It is possible that a follow up interview will be requested depending on other identified needs for the research. The interview will be audio and/or video-recorded (pending your consent) and
transcribed. The transcription of the interview will be presented to you for verification of accuracy. In addition to the interview, I will attend two to three of the regularly scheduled monthly board meetings to observe the interactions among members and to gain an understanding of the planning that takes place during the meetings.

Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty to you. All information you provide, including personal demographic data, will be kept confidential in a secure location.

For confidentiality purposes, the interview transcripts, my observations, which will be recorded in my field notes and all files pertaining to your participation in this study will be stored in a locked cabinet for at least ten years and destroyed afterwards if no longer needed. Dr. Antonia Lukenchuk, Benedictine University faculty member will keep all associated computer files on a secure server and ultimately destroy the information.

I will also maintain a copy of the data on a password-protected computer. I, the principal researcher, am the only person privy to your actual name. The interview will be given a secure code. A pseudonym will be assigned to your name to keep all the information fully confidential. Data from my research will be in my dissertation and may be presented at public forums, at conferences, or in journals, but this will be done only in general terms. Under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics appear in these writings. If, at a subsequent date, biographical data were relevant to a publication, a separate release form would be sent to you.
The study has been approved by Benedictine University Institutional Review Board, chaired by Dr. Alandra Weller-Clarke who can be reached at aclarke@ben.edu; or at (630) 829-6295.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding this study at 630-643-0555 or via email at lulu.blacksmith@gmail.com. You may also contact my dissertation director, Dr. Antonina Lukenchuk at: alukenchuk@ben.edu; or at (630) 310-6382.

A signed copy of this consent form will be provided to you. To grant your consent, kindly sign in the two sections below.

Thank you,
Lourdes (Lulu) Blacksmith

_I consent to participate in this study._
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE
Appendix B

Interview Guide

1. Please tell me how you became a WIB member. What motivated you to join the WIB? What does the WIB membership mean to you?

2. What role do you play within the WIB and what does it mean to you?

3. What do you think about general WIA’s principles and goals? How you see your own position on the WIB in relation to these principles and goals? What do you think the WIB should stand for?

4. What are the processes of establishing local WIB goals? What are other workforce strategies?

5. How does the WIB achieve local business involvement in workforce development? What unites businesses and sustains their participation?

6. What influence (if any) do businesses have over workforce issues in the local area and how does the WIB capitalize on this influence?

7. From your perspective, what are the best practices of engaging businesses in local WIB activities?

8. What are the processes and best practices of engaging community colleges in local WIB activities?

9. Does the WIB maintain federal-state-local relationships (U.S. DOL and State Workforce Investment Board) on an ongoing basis?

10. Please tell me how you understand collaboration.

11. Please tell me how you understand partnership.

12. What are the steps involved in engaging WIB members in communicating, sharing power, and learning from each other to address the labor market issues of the local area?

13. What makes a collaborative partnership truly distinctive? What makes it work?
14. From your experience and perspective, what are the best practices of engaging employers in a meaningful in the workforce development system?

15. How does the WIB evaluate the outcomes of the WIB’s workforce programs?

16. What are this board’s best practices and collective efforts in terms of shaping job access and skills training offerings?

17. What do you think are the greatest contributions of partners who bring their unique capacity, expertise or resources? Do you have examples of such partners?

18. What are the best practices of sharing responsibility, ownership, and accountability of the workforce outcomes?

19. Imagine the best-case scenario for addressing unemployment in the local area… What does it look like?

20. Is there something I did not ask that you would like me to know about collaborative partnerships and your involvement with the WIB?
APPENDIX C

MEMBER-CHECK LETTER
Appendix C
Member-Check Letter

Dear Participant,

I want to thank you again for your participation in my study on May 12, 2014 and for your support.

I have completed the task of transcribing your interview. Is it possible for you to review the attached transcription to ensure that it is an accurate representation of your interview? Please note that for the purpose of this review, I have included identifying information about you and other people who were referred by name. I will remove all personal identifiers when I receive the document back with your feedback.

Again, the primary reason for sharing this document with you is to confirm that the transcription is an actual representation of your experiences. If you find errors or would like me to remove information please note it. Also, if you have additional information you would like to contribute or want to make a clarification, kindly include it in your comments. I will make sure to make all the corrections and include any additional information on the document before I proceed with the data analysis.

Is it possible for you to return your comments within two weeks of receiving this email in the format that is most convenient for you? Below please find some examples:

- Annotate it on a hard copy and mail it to me (Lulu Blacksmith, 2731 Miller Rd., Geneva, IL 60134).
- Annotate it on a hard copy, scan it, and mail it to me at lulu.blacksmith@gmail.com.
• Use the “track changes” tool in Microsoft Word, resave the document and send it to me via email.

• Write your comments in a paragraph format indicating the # of the question(s) you would like me to revise. Or…

Please call me at 630-643-0555 to tell me exactly what you would like me to change.

Again, I truly appreciate your participation in my study and thank you for sharing your experience and perspectives about your work with the Workforce Investment Board of the County.

Warm regards,
APPENDIX D

FIRST AND SECOND CYCLES OF CODING
Appendix D
First And Second Cycles Of Coding

What role do you play within the WIB and what does it mean to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Having a voice - personal contribution and active participation (18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I think it's going to give me an opportunity to get more involved in the initiatives that are available through the WIB. There are things that I wasn't aware of. Hopefully, it will give me a little more exposure to what they are doing. I would like to make an impact. It's really important to me. Getting involved means something to me. | Get more involved. Gain awareness of workforce initiatives Values personal involvement | Be a voice Be a voice for health care Be a voice for the community Be a voice to help solve issues Be a good partner Be an active participant Bring/Utilize life experience to help people Get more involved. Has contributed/questioned decisions using personal experience/expertise Help with workforce issues Provide Human Resources point of view—(Expertise) Sees importance and connection to the economic wealth of the County in workforce development Sees importance of being part of the Board Values active participation and collaboration of members Values personal involvement |}
| It means being a good partner. We have tremendous leadership within the WIB. There is business administrative support around that. It means trying to be a voice at the table for our entire community. My interest is around healthcare making sure that that's serviced well within the WIB. My role within the WIB? I've served as the chair of the Board for quite a while and on the Strategic Partnership Committee. I also sit on the Executive Committee. I'm now a co-chair of the Systems and Trends Committee. | Be a good partner Be a voice for health care Serve/d as chair and on subcommittees (Leadership) | |
| Again, obviously representing my company that I work for, UPS. But again I am on one of the subcommittees, the Trends and Analysis Committee. There are roles and responsibilities associated with being on that committee. But | Represent company—large company Serves/d on subcommittees Understanding purpose-initiatives—future trends Provide Human | |

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again, it's just like the title states Trend and Analysis. You have to know what's going on, where we have been, and where do we need to go. We have to know what the Workforce Investment Board can do to facilitate that movement. I try to participate from my point of view as a human resources manager within UPS. We represent a certain portion of the state and the County. Obviously that is what the Workforce Investment Board represents to me. That is my role to put my two cents in. When folks have issues that are brought up at these meetings, I want to have my input as well.

I bring something to the Board. I have a lot of life experience from all the things that I am involved in. It's important for me to sit on the Board to find out what's going and to find out how I can play a role in pointing people in the right direction.

My role is more symbolic. It means that we are serious about partnerships with business because the leader of the college is at the table. That role is very important. It is important that others see that we take it very seriously. That goes hand-in-hand with what it means to me. I take this partnership, this role, very seriously. We have a big role. We are developing our community members. We are providing them with the education and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources point of view—(Expertise)</th>
<th>Values personal involvement</th>
<th>Provides symbolic presence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be a voice to help solve issues</td>
<td>Bring/Utilize life experience to help people</td>
<td>Sees importance of being part of the Board</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gain understanding/Learn what is going on</td>
<td>Has significant role as provider of education and training</td>
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<tr>
<td>and groups to make an impact (collaborating-partnering)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding purpose-initiatives-future trends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity to learn (other) (8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understands value of cross-over membership</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned through asking questions/challenging decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sees value/importance of participating in events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest but unable to serve in leadership role due to role at work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is involved in other related organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is somewhat uncertain about personal contributions</td>
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</table>

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training necessary to improve their lives, which improves our economy, which brings more businesses into the area. It is just a part of the cycle.

Currently my role within the WIB is being a Board member. In the past, I have served on the Youth Council Committee. I chaired that committee. I do still have a particular concern in that area. Currently, I play the role of being a Board member. In the near future, I can see myself taking on a different role. What that means to me, once again, is making sure that I do have an opportunity to be there when decisions are being made. Often times there are significant dollars that are being discussed and those dollars can potentially affect the lifestyle of many people in our community.

The role that I play? I sit on committees. I am on the Youth Council. Although, I feel I am too old for it, but I sit on the Youth Council. Because of my role as the Speaker of the County, unfortunately, I have not been able to attend a lot of those meetings. However, what it means to me is that I have a voice. We are able to vote on grants and on a lot of other issues. I have a voice. In my opinion, it pays to have a role and being a part of it. It reminds me. Before you were born, there was a television commercial for Shake and Bake and the little girl in the commercial said,
“And I helped.” Even though the mother baked it. I like to think of it that way. I help in some small way.

| Serves/chairs committees  
Serves on committee  
Sees importance and connection to the economic wealth of the County in workforce development  
Values active participation and collaboration of members  
Sees value/importance of participating in events |
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<tr>
<td>I've always been a Board member. I've always been a member of the executive committee. More recently, I was chairing the policy committee. Now, I am actually the Vice Chairman of the WIB. I think next year I will be the chairman. Again, what it means to me is that all economic development leadership needs to have a leadership role on the Workforce Investment Board. Collaboration needs people to collaborate. It's one thing to talk about collaboration, but to actually work cooperatively and collaboratively; you have to have people that actually are doing it. I think that's what the WIB offers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So far, I am on one committee within the Workforce Investment Board. It’s the Strategic Policies Committee. We do quite a bit about determining how funds are going to be spent. We also determine what funds are going to be allocated to the workforce or to the various agencies of the government. I serve as a member. I have been invited to do a leadership role. However, right now with my role at Lewis, I can only serve as a member. I am only on that committee, the Strategic Policies Committee. I attend the Board meetings. I take pride in saying that I am probably one of the best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services/leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sees importance and connection to the economic wealth of the County in workforce development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values active participation and collaboration of members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serves on committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest but unable to serve in leadership role due to role at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has professional interest-institution provides training and is a client of WIB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sees value/importance of participating in events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
attendees. It has been a great opportunity to actively participate. Also, Lewis has different educational programs that are listed on the state approved list. I have the opportunity to submit those programs for approval. Of course, I recuse myself when those come up for a vote. So, it's regular attendance at Board meetings and participation on all the different events that the Board sponsors.

| I am a board member at large. I am on the Systems and Trends Committee. We review policy and different issues. | Serves on committee |
| I fill the education portion, along with Eileen Daniels who does the higher education, which connects to a lot of things. I'm on the Manufacturing Association board. This kind of connects with that. I'm on the Manufacturing Association Education to Employment System Board. These things all come together. I am a catalyst. I help by sharing between those entities all of what is going on. I share about the upcoming changes, about the things that can we do, where we can partner and how we can work together. I'm also a liaison to the educational world. I can inform not only my colleagues here within the district but also my colleagues outside the district. This district is very unique; it’s a high school district. We have over nine other school districts that feed into us. I meet with the | Serves/co-chairs on committee Represents K-12 Is involved in other related organizations Understands value of cross-over membership Sharing across institution and groups to make an impact (collaborating-partnering) Values process of program review, data collection and accountability on the Board (Collaboration among members) |
other superintendents regularly. I am on the Youth Council Committee. I am a co-chair. I'm relatively a new to co-chair role. I'm learning. What's really interesting to me, and what I really enjoy is the data collection and the fact that the Board is accountable. They look at those numbers and see how they grow or change from year to year and when numbers are different. When the numbers are different, there's always an explanation. We have great discussions around that and about why individuals are not coming to get the services. We talk about how we can reach this audience, the audience that we intended to reach. There's always discussion behind the numbers not just the numbers for the numbers sake.

| First and foremost, I am a member of the Board. We meet every other month and discuss what the workforce division is trying to accomplish. I am also part of the Youth Council Committee where they develop an annual program to educate and bring together those in the community that reach out to the youth. As far as what it means to me? Like I mentioned, sometimes I don't really know what my position is or what value I am adding. At times when things come up that are within the scope of my responsibility at the credit union, I share my knowledge. I do try to make points. Recently, the Workforce Investment Board Serves on committee Understands process of program/goal development Is somewhat uncertain about personal contributions Has contributed/questioned decisions using personal experience/expertise Learned through asking questions/challenging decisions |
|---|---|
decided to deny one of the programs for an online business administration degree. At first I wondered why. I said to Pat, “Why would you deny that program? Those are one of the most rigorous courses.” Once we talked, I understood that they didn’t want folks to be in a more challenging position. Online programs require better time management versus being in the classroom. Some of the professors at St. Francis also said that you have to have really good time management to be successful in online work. He said that students do better in the classroom then they do online. The people we’re serving through the WIB might need a little bit more attention and more of a partnership with the faculty in order to succeed.
APPENDIX E

FREQUENCY OF CODES AND EMERGENT THEMES
Appendix E

Frequency Of Codes And Emergent Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Funding (Lack Of)</td>
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<td>Effective (Board)</td>
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- BUILD / SUSTAIN PARTNERSHIPS
- HISTORICAL LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT (1)
- MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS (2)
- IDEAS/STRATEGIES (3)
- PROCESS OF DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS/INITIATIVES (4)
APPENDIX F

SEARCH BY WORD SAMPLE EDUCATION
Appendix F

Search By Word Sample: Education

College on our WIB. The representatives from education who sit on the Board always amaze me with
have a lot of people from the business and education community on this Board. The businesses, the
their business to the table. On the higher education side, we have great people who contribute.
go. The representatives from the education side that sit on the Board share their
concerns about more than just their own educational programs. They abstain from voting on
. It’s because they have not stayed in education long enough. They may not have the basic
colleges are about rising up people’s education levels and improving their lives through
levels and improving their lives through education. The WIB is about providing employers with
members. We are providing them with the education and training necessary to improve their lives
overall umbrella that brings businesses and education into a more cohesive environment. That seems
offer them training for their employees or to help them find education facilities for businesses.
that we have a great training facility or educational facilities. Also, we apply for many of the
the programs that are being developed by the education community are effective. The employers find
how many students; employees go through WIA education or re-training programs. We know which ones
Education is the key to the process. One way or another, we have to make sure that we are providing
have to make sure that we are providing the education that’s needed for the next generation. When
primary focus is on adults. It’s about adult education. It’s about funding for adults. Somehow we
of working together. We need our higher education, our junior colleges, our grade schools, our
we ask of our companies and our higher education folks is...Can you find skilled workers in the
individuals such as those who have educational, and family problems. Maybe it is a
are poverty ridden, those who have a good education and maybe are even currently employed, but
that may not have the experience or the education. Through an OJT program, at least you get to
participate. Also, Lewis has different educational programs that are listed on the State of
The WIB’s role is to bring industry, education and financial resources together to develop a highly
and may have been struggling with their education. The WIB stands for that resource that
have is that local community colleges bring educational programs, workforce education programs to
of care. Everyone was involved, the WIB, educational institutions, hospitals and the patients.
. The hospital provided the location for the education training. They gave the nurses the time off
as Jobs Corps, the employment services and education. A lot of times we like to say that we’re
We have a lot of Board members who come from education and banking backgrounds. They will ask too
governments, the local workforce board and education. Will County has very high quality education
education. Will County has very high quality education from preschool to higher education. The
quality education from preschool to higher education. The infrastructure, its government, its
of the presidents of the colleges are on the education council at the EDC. They work together. John
did I see more now that I am in higher education and on the Board. I see the tension from the
and of course the larger ones had educational development officers. They had training
to things that I think are important to education and communities. It’s about being asked.
that you can say there is influence is with education. A number of the educational organizations
influence is with education. A number of the educational organizations are involved on the WIB, as the Economic Development Corporation, education and workforce organizations. The WIB is that. It’s the ability to align good skills, education and training. What are people good at? What I fill the education portion, along with Deb Daniels who does the higher education, which connects, along with Deb Daniels who does the higher education, which connects to a lot of things. I’m on connects with that. I’m on the Three Rivers Education to Employment System Board. These things all can work together. I’m also a liaison to the educational world. I can inform not only my colleagues for a long time in education, and I am thinking about 20 years ago, there was a lot of finger, I speak about businesses versus education —— businesses were crying out, “We need a we really have to talk about local higher education. You alluded to this; I am a firm believer this; I am a firm believer that some form of education is important for every individual. We live Start preparing individuals and have ongoing educational programs for them. It’s just really vital.

It’s community leaders. It’s higher education. It’s religious leaders and the public. does and all the decisions that are made. In education new ideas come all the time. When a new idea bit of a connection to the employment and educational aspect. Getting people employed, those who end of things, those who do not have the education, I thought I might add value sharing what government dollars are going toward certain educational programs and going in the proper areas. We . The WIB has representatives from education, business and social service. I think all you also have the opinions from those who are in service and the opinion of those in education. organizations, sharing with business and education. So each tidbit, if you will, that comes have a program called TREP, Three Rivers Education Partners. I worked with them in the past two One of the ways is to get the businesses and education together. I spend a lot of time with Laura is where I understand could be a successful educational program for students. They will pay part of to them. They are trying to have a couple of educational seminars at Three Rivers Manufacturing would be a great thing. Businesses and education could find a way to work together like we other. For example the project with did with education. The joint development project we did three. They also brought another guy from education from the same school. We are talking to each . It has to be all three, the businesses, education and the economic development. We also just where we could get involvement from education. Lewis is a perfect example. They would . But it’s the collaboration of those three [education, businesses, economic development] if we It could be for social reasons. It could be educational workshops for our companies. We have found
APPENDIX G

IDENTIFICATION OF THEMES BASED ON FREQUENCY OF CODES AND THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIPS
Appendix G
Identification Of Themes Based On Frequency Of Codes And Their Interrelationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th># of Times</th>
<th>Emerging Themes by Word Put Into Context</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

Total reflects the word search analysis and number of statements made related to Collaborating
Total reflects the word search analysis and number of statements made related to Leadership
Total reflects the word search analysis and number of statements made related to Motivation to being involved
APPENDIX H

THEMES GENERATED THROUGH STATEMENTS
Appendix H

Themes Generated Through Statements

**Leadership (103)**

- Ability to connect to the needs
- Achieves involvement by engaging employers in the WIB
- Be clear about the expectations/bylaws (*in reference to Board membership*)
- Being responsive to their needs
- Believes employers do have an influence
- Believes the Board has a good mix of business representatives reflecting the economic development plans of the County

*Believes the WIB has broad representation from businesses Collaboration between education and employers*

- Believes the WIB has effective workforce programs—providing life-work sills
- Believes this WIB is effective when compared to others—accountable
- Believes WIB is effective when compared to others
- Believes WIB is effective when compared to others
- Believes WIB is effective-moving in the right direction-participation in WIB is guided by its effectiveness

- Believes WIB is responsive
- Board (staff) to listen to feedback—adjusting putting into practice this feedback
- Board needs to be a business leadership group that encourages staff to think outside the box
- Businesses contribute (sponsorships and using their worksite) to the WIB’s efforts

*CED conducts surveys and shares information with the WIB (Collaboration between the two)*

- Communication/information from staff

*Composition (representatives from different areas) Workforce Investment Board comes in*

- Considers the participation of EDC as a good thing due to relationships with businesses
- Credits EDC for providing incentive for businesses to come to the County.
- Credits WIB Manager for ensuring appropriate use of funds
- Credits WIB Manager for establishing goals to address local labor issues.
- Credits WIB manager for the establishment of goals
- Credits WIB Manager for the establishments of the goals—putting them together and are

*Cross over work with EDC and the WIB*

- Develop relationships with higher education -Employers’ staff developing these relationships

*Developing (supporting) collaborations/safe collaborations around workforce needs*

- Development of workforce activities is performed by WIB Manager
- Develops goals and they are implemented every two-three years through a structured strategic planning conducted by an outside facilitator. There is a review of programs to ensure effectiveness and adherence to guidelines
Does not believe this WIB operates in a political way
Doing research to identify training gaps—lack of workers with specific skills for certain industries
Effective-meaningful meetings-no rubber stamping
Effectiveness of principles/goals based on ROI
Effectiveness of programs
Efficiency and the data provided (topical and relevant) by WIB Manager
Efficient way of providing information-helps run effective meetings (sent ahead of time—members don’t ask questions—questions addressed via personal communication)
Engaging employers (job fairs, seeking their feedback, visiting employers’ sites)
Establishes goals with businesses in mind
Executive Board monitors participation of businesses to meet WIA requirement (51%) – Experienced it for the first time this year-sees it as a result to the various discussions taking place at meetings/committee level
Focus on helping employers with workforce training
Get a lot from businesses by engaging them
Goals are established based on local needs and funding available
*Has done phenomenal job encouraging Board to participate [manager]*
Has process to match goals and objectives with the economic development strategy of the County
Have an organized plan/program
Having an effective Board as a way to engage employers
Help them understand they play a vital role
Identifies goals as being embedded
Information from employers utilized when developing strategic plans
Involves Board members in recruitment of other board members
Is involved in other related organizations
Knowing how to connect to the needs
Leadership is key
Learned through asking questions/challenging decisions
Making sure businesses are being engaged keeping them on the Board
Motivational to be in front of job seekers—ability to help them understand what is important and how the job market has evolved
Ongoing community Outreach – participation in events (to help employers) from staff Outreach/marketing to employees
Overlap with EDC
Participation in committees *(requirement)*
Perceives the establishment of goals as the Manager’s job
Perceives the WIB as being effective
Perceives the WIB as having a fantastic relationship with businesses
Perceives WIB as effective when compared to others
Praises the work of the WIB Manager
Praises WIB manager of doing a very good job for properly serving the community (1-7)
Prioritized-discussed at committee level and approved by entire Board
Process is led by staff—board reviews goals until sure those are the appropriate goals and voting takes place
Programs are developed based on research
Provides sample of a company that has received assistance from the WIB
Providing assistance to employers in a variety of ways (grant-layoffs)
Providing information on the businesses located in the area, visiting businesses
Recognizes importance of working with educational institutions to both find funding and provide training resources to employers
Recruitment of employees is done through this relationships- not through advertising (does not work)
Responsiveness from WIB Manager- (listens-researches before decisions are made)
Return on the investment (in reference to this WIB-others could follow the example)
Review of goals takes place, develop new goals, build on success—develop indicators for success (outcome measurements)
Sees Board as a moral compass for the distribution of funds
Sees WIB as effective
Show them the value on the investment on their time
Sophisticated strategy—type of information presented at Board meetings
Staff “has a good finger on the pulse of the businesses” through the research they do
Staff ability to understand businesses – looking at their jobs as entrepreneurs (private sector) vs. governmental agency
Staff follows the goals that are dictated to them
Staff-other leaders involved in WIA advocacy efforts (funding)
Stands for making sure communities have appropriate training for the jobs available – to prepare for future labor market needs
Staying up-to-date on needs-projecting for the future
Successful boards have good executive directors and key staff. WIB of the county because it has a director that thinks like the private business and it also has key staff
Supports connection and advantages of working with the EDC
Sustains participation because the assistance (training needs- incentives provided to them) they provide from the WIB
The “cosmopolitan of people involved on the Board with different ways to help the Diversity of Board part of the strategy
The Board capitalizes from the broad membership
The influence of employers is through addressing their needs
Understands value of cross-over membership
Unity comes from effectiveness of the Board—staff
Unity comes from the common theme of working together (the mix of members)
WIB – EDC (Partnership) has aggressive plan to help companies
WIB Manager provides up-to-date information
WIB Manager’s leadership is important (She sets the tone)
WIB proactive helping businesses
WIB staff provide outreach
Wonderful folks (staff) helping achieve the goals
Collaboration
A partnership where both sides are engaged
Ability to work with everyone—discussing ideas (businesses/education)
Active participation
Asking employers for feedback
Awareness from employers about the effectiveness of the programs to help them have fewer turnover of employees
Be a good partner
Be a voice
Be a voice for health care
Be a voice for the community
Be a voice to help solve issues
Be an active participant
Being a voice—reaching out to legislators
Being on the board-participating is how each contributes
Bring/Utilize life experience to help people Get more involved.
Business and education working together on joint projects (sample)
Business provide first-hand knowledge (Participates to provide input from the business perspective—health care perspective)
Business speaking to small/specific audiences for a mutual understanding (those unemployed knowing what business want. Employers seeing who the job seekers are and what they may offer—increase opportunity for employment-avoid pitfalls and obstacle-helping job seekers move in the right direction)
Capitalizes on feedback received from members
Capitalizes on their influence by having them at the table-involvement in committees
Capitalizes on their influence by seeking their feedback
Collaboration does not involve a lot of negotiation. It's a willingness to come together.
Collaboration is being a part of something, helping in and having input.
Collaboration is both parties doing something that is going to benefit each other.
Collaboration is when two or more parties’ gather together without any implied financial or resource commitment
Collaboration is working together with other groups to achieve a goal. It might be to your advantage or it might be to the advantage of the whole.
Collaboration really does mean working together for a common goal
Collaboration to me is for two different parties or more to understand each other’s position and what they can bring to a collaborative relationship
Communicating with each other
Communication
Communication is the key to any relationship
Developing relationships
Discussing ideas perspectives for shared value
Diversified Board working together
Diversified membership that provides oversight and perspective of programs (5)
Diversity of Board-collaborations with EDC
Diversity of the Board – partners contributes to goals
Employers participate in approval of programs-with focus in the local area
Employers providing relevant feedback
Employers share their problems (hiring people)
Employers sharing current issues with employment (recruiting, onboarding retention)
Especially in companies where you have people competing for the same limited resources. It is part of collaboration; it’s part of building relationships with partnerships. It’s not so much about, “If I help you, you will help me.” It’s about the overall mission of the organization.
Everyone has an open ear, listens attentively, and thinks about how to respond.
Everyone moving in the same direction
Feedback from employers/education to make sure training is adequate
Find commonalities
Group of people are willing to come together and work for a common cause, a common project, or a common goal
Has contributed/questioned decisions using personal experience/expertise
Having a cosmopolitan of people (diversified) Board
Having a dialogue about whether or not truly is an opportunity to collaborate
Having Board members at the table
Having employers being part of the conversation and hearing their feedback about what might or might not work
Having meaningful involvement (having a voice)
Having ongoing communication among all the partners
Help with workforce issues
I am a consultant. You consult for my opinion.
I have written papers about the silos and people getting into furthering their own agendas. While people are in those methodologies, those mindsets, it can really be an obstacle to collaboration. In today's world, no one can do anything on his or her own.
I look at collaboration as not just having a relationship, but also having communication. I may get informed about things. Collaboration may also be a short-term commitment.
I never thought of those two being separate.
I understand it as working together for a common goal.
I would not want to be working under any other method. But it does sometimes take a little longer. A collaborative leadership environment it's the community at large. That is how I see collaboration-sometimes it takes the group a little longer for things to be decided when you're working in a collaborative partnership
Important to have disagreements – discussions to ensure funding is going in the appropriate areas.
Important to share information as an employer
Influence comes from cross over membership
Influence comes from having education involved (the community college-St. Francis and Lewis)
Influence comes from research and feedback from businesses
Influence comes from the business participation on the board-they share and they communicate
Influence comes from the connection to the business leaders and working together
Influence comes from the participation of other organizations in the County
Influence comes from those who are on the Board
Inviting them to participate Ability to utilize each individual’s strengths
Involvement from local businesses
Involvement on the Board is important
Involving them on the WIB
It stands for people working together (1)
It's about shared values and established goals.
It's something that each side is willing to work together for a mutual benefit.
It’s about what each party has to offer
It's about working hard and working together—producing positive results
It’s important establishing how to collaborate. At the end, of that collaboration all parties
will have some shared value.
It's trying to figure something out
the community college is highly involved
Leaders from the County involved in the WIB to attract businesses and advocate on
behalf at the federal and state level
Now businesses’ influence K-12. They are now talking – collaborating to become
partners. Business-education did not work together in the past- they blamed each other –
did not work together
On the Board, it is our ability to share ideas, explain what they mean, and talk about how
to fix problems
Ongoing surveys (intentional-target industries) to employers-Collaborative WIB study
Participation from large/small companies (Participation is evidence of sustaining
business)
Participation in discussion—providing input
Position is to bring the voice of underserved individuals
Programs created based on feedback received from employers
Promoting the services of the board to employers
Provide Human Resources point of view—(Expertise)
Seeks feedback from businesses
Sees new comers who bring new energy
Sharing and providing their views perspectives-it helps to have various thoughts, ideas
That means that you have to give-and-take, that there is compromise.
The diversity of the Board
There has to be value that each party brings to the collaboration.
There to make things better
They all work together for a common outcome.
Understanding workforce characteristics and employer needs
Values active participation and collaboration of members
WIB-CED - Intentionally and meaningfully working together
Within the collaboration my opinion is highly sought.
Work with CED-businesses-education
Working together (meaningful conversations) to prevent lack of appropriate and relevant training (prevent the issues we have today with those who are out of work) Working together to improve the skills of the people. You may collaborate, but there is an understanding that there is no compensation

**Motivation**

Actively participating, understanding top occupations and making decisions around that. Addressing manufacturer’s concerns for highly skilled employees Assist obtain jobs

Awareness about employers in the area and their ongoing labor needs 

Based on size of companies—large/small companies find value being involved on the WIB

Being part of the bigger picture (Economic prosperity of the County-getting people in jobs?)

Bringing awareness-working with them-caring about their needs

Employer has history participating on WIB (president also participates)

Employers are interested in recruiting people (the right people)

Employers increase efficiencies in recruiting employees—saving $

Employers need a good source—a place to find qualified individuals—they would go back for more (Increase engagement—sustain their participation? —general statement of specific to the WIB)

Employers’ influence comes from their contribution to the economy (taxes-paying salaries-jobs)

Gain awareness of workforce initiatives

Gain understanding/Learn what is going on

Grants to employers

Has interest in Youth Committee-in leadership

Has professional experience in witnessing the drastic changes in labor market

Has professional interest-institution provides training and is a client of WIB-Has significant role as provider of education and training

Help them understand the return on the investment—to them personally and for their business

Helping job seekers-unemployed individuals with assistance to become employable

Identifying the mutual benefits of having a good board

Interest in putting people in jobs

Involvement needs to relate/connect to employer/company

Job fairs and job posting opportunities are also a good way to engage employers (ROI)

Keep people in school

Make it meaningful and relevant

Meeting employers’ needs

Meeting their workforce needs

Need for qualified employees unites businesses

Opportunities for employers to improve recruitment (WorkKeys)

Opportunity to work promote manufacturing through involvement as employer

Participation on WIB is important to companies
Perceives Board as meeting the needs of employers (Education-businesses working together) has received appreciation for assistance they received finding qualified employees
Perceives other Board members as finding value about being on the Board
Personal satisfaction when goals are accomplished—people get jobs
Position on Board is to provide access to workforce information – understands first-hand as a minority
Programs are created to address their needs
Provides symbolic presence
Providing them workforce assistance
Represent company—large company
Representation may come as a “mandate” or due to personal interest
Represents K-12
Seeing progress being made
Sees importance and connection to the economic wealth of the County in workforce development
Sees importance of being part of the Board
Sees position as an opportunity to carry out those goals. At this WIB goals on not just on print, they are also carried out.
Sees primary strategy as increasing employability in County (WIB not doing enough?)
Sees results—people are being helped to get GED, getting jobs, and earning a salary
Sees some work being done/progress in addressing workforce issues
Sharing across institution and groups to make an impact (collaborating-partnering)
Staying abreast of employers/businesses needs
Surveying both Board members and the community (businesses) – providing them with what they need
The benefit from programs
The focus on local area is to address employer’s concern
Understanding employers with skill gaps
Understanding purpose-initiatives-future trends
Value participation
Values personal involvement
Values personal involvement
Values process of program review, data collection and accountability on the Board (Collaboration among members)
Values the participation of the Board (5)
WIB (attracts) sustains businesses because of resources in the County
Workforce training/workshops opportunities – partnership with other related agencies

Sub-themes
Opportunities
Believes employers are unsure/unaware how to connect to the board
Believes in early intervention – getting to youth sooner
Believes more needs to be done to prepare individuals for the workforce
Believes not enough businesses involved on WBI
Bringing job seekers with employers
Businesses want others to know what they do
Businesses working in silos
Cautious about overall accountability for dollars awarded to WIB
CEOs not intimately involved with what is going on in hiring practices
Challenge is the mandated partners—not all collaborate (Provided example)
Companies do not turn sources/resources that provide them with a flow of applicants
Companies may be working on their own—employing own strategies when they have
general themes—comprehensive system needed—businesses needs are the same
Company works with universities to offer internships only to industrial engineering
students—participate in job fairs with universities (Bradley) that are known for
engineering programs
Constantly seeking to engage business (as a university and as the WIB)
Despite efforts—websites-communication and staff communication to the Board
Developing training institutions resource guide for employers
Does not believe businesses are connected
Does not to believe businesses are driving the agenda
Doesn’t understand how funding is appropriated
Engage business by providing them information about the resources that are available to
them
Figure out ways to provide students internships (example given)
Get companies out to talk about their employment/internship opportunities
Having instructors from the business sector
Human resources is down on staff due to technology—lack of manpower prevents them
from increasing recruitment efforts
Identifies gap in employee/training development at companies due to lack of resources
Interest but unable to serve in leadership role due to role at work
Interest from the Board to visit companies to learn about their business
Is somewhat uncertain about personal contributions
Lack of business involvement
Large number of individuals are out of work—considering the County is one of the fastest-
growing companies
Liked previous incumbent program
Make sure WIB/people working with WIB understand the industries (type of businesses)
to hone their programs (what types of jobs are needed)
Must have trust in those programs—education must be valuable and content is relevant
Need to bring awareness about today’s manufacturing (jobs range from manual work to
PhDs.)
Need to do more/something different to provide employers with qualified individuals
Need to work together to catch up on the needs of employers
Need to work with education and businesses to meet labor needs
Outreach for adults to re-educate them (2)
Outreach to those not present at the table
Perceived lack of alliances to prepare workforce
Perceives a demand for employers involvement in the community
Perceives a need to bring back the incumbent worker program (WIA-discontinued)
Perceives low participation in youth programs
Provide assistance to them by posting jobs
Provide scholarships—has seen a positive outcome (although not always)—want to see more of that to accomplish WIB goals—addressing skill gaps
Provide value on their investment
Senses a lack of knowledge from Board members
Skills gap needs to be addressed—problem affecting other companies
Statement about skills mismatch
Strategies: retention visits (gather information about employer’s training needs
Suggestion to have a space where employers-job seekers come together to help job seekers
Support workforce in a meaningful way
There are always needs for good educators to be part of practical training
There has to be a written document or something that outlines the agreement
There is a current need for information technology. Employers taking people right out of school. CC need to figure out how to incorporate practical experience into their training (internships)
There is competition
Unaware of the activities employed to engage local community colleges (on the Board)
Unsure about the outreach process in schools and sees gaps
Unsure of how many are successfully getting jobs
Wants to see improvement in reaching out to other employers—provided examples of strategies
WIB can impact those areas in need—the gaps—what is missing
Work with faculty to identify students-recommendations from them

Community Colleges
Adjust their offerings to meet the needs of the labor market
And business play a big role determining upcoming trends ‘in manufacturing’ and tailor those trends to meet the needs of employers
And WIB need to work together to meet the needs of WIB’s clients—it’s about matching their missions
Are a vital resource as well as other higher educational resources
Assessing individuals (WorkKeys) to identify qualified-non qualified individuals)
Aware of partnership between WIB and JCC
Can make an investment by finding a balance – bringing additional instructors to meet the capacity (for those areas in need)
CC the community college “has a keen sense of the needs of the industry.”
Community Colleges need to do more marketing – building more relationships (Four year universities do better in this area) gave sample)
Does very good in terms of job training; they are positioning individuals for jobs
Education needs to adapt to changes in environment
Education needs to take into consideration that not everyone needs a four-year degree—prepare students for ongoing educational programs.

Educational institutions focus on education vs. workforce training.

Employers provide CC feedback-help them engage in best practices (compared to others)

Encouraging CC staff involved and participate at WIB meetings

Has had indirect connections (presentation to students)

Has interest in working with the community college

Has not worked with CC

Has not worked with the community college as an employer

Has program in place for youth – a collaboration between the community college and WIB-it works well

Have been frustrated with CC because they were not able to keep up with the training needs (not training enough nurses) – inability to find the right balance (too many of one occupation or not enough)

Having a long standing CC

Having the president of the CC sit at the table

Having the President of the CC sit on the board

Help prepare people for educational opportunities (at low cost)

Institution is a training client of WIB (mutual benefit)

Involvement from the community college –the president sits on the Board

It’s a wonderful opportunity for the CC to be involved. They not only have a voice- they get to hear things that is going on in the County.

It’s advantageous to have/work with CC. They have quality programs and are cost effective

JCC is heavily represented on the Board

the community college (president) vital partner for the WIB

the community college has not approached them as employers

the community college is actively involved on WIB

the community college is the only CC involved on the WIB

the community college is very involved with the Board because they provide training to employers

the community college major vendor (provider of training)

the community college provides a lot of the services

Knows of their ability to create programs

Leadership of the college is important—encouraging participation from college staff

Must work together with the community college-employers-only way to succeed

Mutual value/relationship – they actively participate with each other

Part of their role is to anticipate needs – to be two steps ahead of employers – they seem reactive, like they are always two steps behind

Partner with WIB (employers) to host workforce activities-CC are a the link between businesses and the WIB (also a way to promote the CC)

Planning programs ahead of time but also flexible when needed

Play a huge role

Plays a huge benefit to our entire society-hard for people to get job without a college degree
Provides training for employees – assists with training needs—facilities for training
Staff participating because it helps them to be successful in their jobs
The CC provides training – they submit proposals, and do know they are not always
going to be selected
The collaboration with community colleges stopped about 8-10 years ago. Company had
recruiters (an office) in community colleges – community colleges have gone a different
direction. Companies are now advertising in different ways-blackboards – twitter. They
are no longer going out on the streets and working with colleges.
The president of the community college is involved and 2-3 staff members
Their involvement and their good work wins them contracts
They are doing a great job preparing CNAs. When compared to others, their programs
are better.
They assist write and analyze surveys
They bring information to help qualify people for jobs (WorkKeys)
They engage employers because they care about what they are teaching students to help
them find employment.
They know what is going on by staying engaged
They provide interns
They tailor academic offerings to meet the needs of employers
Training activities carried out by the community college
Universities and community college on WIB provide knowledge and have ability to
create programs for local businesses. They engage with others to apply for grants and
“things like that” (collaborate)
Values the involvement of the community college—ability to design workforce programs
to fulfill a need
WIB partners with the community college
WIB provides grants to the community college to provide training
WorkKeys Program is a program that the Board is working on implementing in
collaboration with the WIB – a program that can reduce recruitment workforce cost to
employers
Works with WIB to make sure they have competitive training programs available to them
(employers)

WIA – WIB’S and Overall Goals - Other
Believes in the principles and goals as being noble and good to help improve the quality
of the workforce (1-7)
Believes these are driven by WIA’s regulations
Board members contribute to the establishment of short-year –five year planning process
Board reviews the appropriateness of the proposed goals—not a lot of discussion—goals
approved as presented (by staff) and shared with the Board prior to meetings
Board stands as an oversight of the funding awarded to the local WIB and it’s going to
the appropriate individuals (1-7)
Business (small) strapped for resources are most likely to take advantage of programs
Employer engagement happens through Website (employers posting jobs)
Every member should stand for WIB goals (1 -6)
Focus on helping underemployed, unemployed, dislocated workers and those
experiencing hardship opportunities for employment and economic prosperity (1-7)
Focused on addressing local issues
Focuses on every aspect of unemployed to help them gain employment (1-7)
Following Federal regulations-followed and worked out in committees
Having the opportunity to break it down to a finer level (6)
Knowledge of overarching purpose
Knows of mandated and non-mandated partners (1, 5)
Mission of WIB is used as the starting point-goals are developed based on local needs—
New member – not familiar with the process
No direct involvement (New member)
Not aware of actual work of developing strategic planning
Outreach to youth to provide education (7)
Overall purpose of the federal/state government to invest in its population-put people to
work (WIA’s Main Purpose)
Participates in development and assessment of job training/job openings and potential
impact on the economy (4 & 6)
Participates in review of goals to make sure they are aligned—implemented
Perceives that the community leaders are aware of the WIB
Perception that WIA’s implementation was not universally applied
Position on the WIB is to provide hope—to bring awareness about the services individuals
in need to help them be successful (1-7)
Provide skills, training and certifications (2)
Provides example of program that assisted youth (7)
Provides exposure to company (5)
Provides funding for workforce development (main purpose 1-7)
Provides knowledge from the industry (manufacturing) perspective (5)
Provides sample of how goals are developed at her company (New to the board? Not
participated in process?)
Providing financial assistance for Youth programs (5)
Receives statistics on programs such those provided in the Resource Room
Responsibility/accountability to accomplish the goals of the WIB – matching
unemployed folks with jobs—increasing their earning potential (4)
Scholarships for job seekers
Sees own position as being “selfish” as an economic development professional (1-7)
Sees own position as being accountable for the overall federal/state guidelines and rules-
responsibility to make it work on the local level (6)
Serve/d as chair and on subcommittees (Leadership)
Served/chairs committees
Serves on committee
Serves on committee
Serves on Committee
Serves/chairs committees (Leadership)
Serves/co-chairs on committee
Serves/d on subcommittees
Should also stand for being responsible for having the appropriate data on what skills are
/will be in demand-and other changes that might impact workforce issues (1-7)
Should stand as a program that is funded permanently- and as a large part of the country
Should stand as a resource for workforce assistance-and economic development-opportunities
Should stand for a credible resource for both, employees and employers
Should stand for a resource that garners all the services for those in need in one place
one-stop shop.
Should stand for addressing employment issues
Should stand for community economic development. It should have very local
characteristics with local leadership.
Should stand for integrity, learning, and resources
Somewhat aware of process of establishing of annual goals
Understand the benefits
Understand the collaborative aspect of WIA-mandated and non-mandated partners (5)—
understands the rules and regulations of the Act
Understands business member requirement – believes has ratio
Understands goals/importance of providing assistance low-income individuals, indigent
and minorities (1-7
Understands integration of services to increase access (1)
Understands process of program/goal development
Understands the process of developing strategy to help youth—to get them into the
classroom
Understands there are rules and regulations
Utilizes data to tailor programs – as a response to the needs of the community
Values involvement from County Board executive (5)
Values participation of partners—everyone coming together for the benefit of the
businesses and the community (1), (5)
Values WIB as a resource for disenfranchised, unemployed, youth and those in need of
training (1-7)
Wants accountability for funding and approvals/sanctions when programs are not
working to promote accountability (1-7)
WIA’s funding and oversight of programs to ensure they are utilized for the intended
purposes and to help with the economic development of the area (4)
WIB emphasis is on dislocated workers and those in need for retraining
WIB provides personal development opportunities (2)